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Chairman: Mrs. TAVARES DE ÁLVAREZ (Dominican Republic)
(Vice-Chairman)

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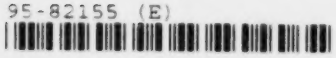

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In the absence of Mr. Tshering (Bhutan), Mrs. Tavares de Álvarez (Dominican Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/12 and Add.1, A/50/413, A/50/414, A/50/555, A/50/275-S/1995/555)

1. Mr. BULL (Liberia) said he had taken note of the improvements that were being made in the methodology to meet the needs of refugees world wide and welcomed in particular the efficacy of the strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions. That strategy could be further enhanced to the extent that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) could rely on the coordinated efforts of Governments, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

2. As a country which had almost one third of its population as refugees in neighbouring countries, Liberia was deeply concerned about the world-wide increase in the number of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. It was also concerned about the relaxation by some countries of international regulations regarding the protection of refugee women and children. Some Governments had instituted restrictive policies which were in clear violation of international human rights instruments. It was therefore imperative that the human rights of refugees should be respected since in most instances those refugees were not responsible for the conditions which had precipitated their involuntary exodus.

3. The alarming refugee problem in Africa reinforced the need for the international community to address the root causes of that tragic situation. In that regard, it was encouraging to note the support being given to regional initiatives to improve the situation of the refugees through their voluntary repatriation. After nearly six years of civil war and the convening of several conferences aimed at ending the conflict in Liberia, the signing of the Abuja peace accord had ushered in a period of optimism. The leaders of the three principal factions were serving as members of a six-man Council of State.

4. In despite of isolated incidents of fighting between combatants of some factions, the new Liberian leadership had pledged its commitment to peace, the demobilization of the combatants and the repatriation and reintegration of Liberian refugees. Since the establishment of the Council of State, more than 12,000 Liberian refugees had voluntarily returned home. As the disarming of combatants was of vital importance to the peace process, a conference had recently been convened to seek international support for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which had deployed the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia, as well as for the inter-agency appeal for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Liberia and the implementation of development-oriented programmes aimed at capacity-building in the country. In that regard, he welcomed the initial response of the international community.

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5. In his thirteenth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), the Secretary-General had recommended that UNOMIL should be increased to its full strength so as to complement the efforts of ECOMOG in monitoring the disarming and demobilization of combatants. To that end, the Government of Liberia had established three commissions with the goals of disarming and reintegrating combatants and repatriating and resettling refugees and displaced persons. His Government was prepared to work closely with UNHCR in determining the requirements for the voluntary return of nearly 800,000 Liberian refugees in preparation for legislative and presidential elections in August 1996.

6. The Liberian Refugees Repatriation and Resettlement Commission would work closely with UNHCR. It was coordinating efforts with sectoral ministries, non-governmental organizations and other institutions and was seeking to mobilize resources so as to provide assistance to returnees and empower communities to resume productive activities, particularly in agriculture. His delegation hoped that the international community would support all those efforts as those activities were an integral part of the peace process designed to return the country to normalcy.

7. His delegation had always advocated that emphasis should be placed on the "continuum from relief to development" and supported the UNHCR concept of addressing humanitarian needs in a community context through area-based strategies and so-called quick impact projects (QIPs). It was estimated that children made up about 50 per cent of the refugee population. Due to their particular vulnerability, special attention should be given to children, especially unaccompanied children, since they were more traumatized and were more susceptible to exploitation. Therefore, host Governments should ensure that that group of refugees was adequately protected pursuant to the UNHCR guidelines on refugee children.

8. It was to be hoped that the international community would continue to assist Liberia in its efforts to repatriate and resettle its citizens who had been forced to flee the country as a result of the civil war. In view of the scarcity of financial resources, a comprehensive approach which gave priority attention to prevention, impact on asylum countries and durable solutions must be pursued. It was everyone's duty to stem the tide of refugee's.

9. Mrs. ACHARYA (Nepal) said that, while the tensions of the cold war had diminished since the early 1990s, in many countries of the world internal political strife and racial, ethnic and other types of conflict had contributed to an increase in the number of refugees and their problems. Many people, mostly innocent women and children, had fled their homelands in search of food and shelter. With the cooperation of many governmental and non-governmental organizations, UNHCR had been actively involved in the management of refugee problems all over the world. Her delegation commended its strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions.

10. Despite limited human and material resources, UNHCR had been successful in alleviating the sufferings of refugees in many parts of the world. However, a durable solution to the problem would be possible only when the root causes of refugee flows were checked in time. Recent political and ethnic turmoil in

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Rwanda had created large new flows of refugees.

11. Currently, Nepal was shouldering the burden of 100,000 refugees from Bhutan. It reaffirmed the right of refugees to return to their country safely and with dignity and was grateful to UNHCR for its continued assistance in providing food, shelter, water, sanitation, health care, education and other community services to the refugee camps in eastern Nepal. Her Government was making every effort to solve the problem of those refugees through mutual discussion and understanding. The large-scale presence of refugees in countries of asylum, in particular least developed countries like Nepal, aggravated their economic problems and contributed to a further degradation of environmental and social conditions. Adequate attention should be given to that problem and special care should be provided to refugee women and children, particularly in conflict situations.

12. Mr. ALAIDROOS (Yemen) said that, while he commended the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/50/12) and the policies which allowed UNHCR to perform the difficult tasks entrusted to it, he wished to offer some clarification regarding paragraphs 196 and 197 of the report. Paragraph 196 mentioned southern Yemen and paragraph 197 referred to northern Yemen as if they were two different countries. It should be recalled that in 1990, the two parts of Yemen had been reunified, after the victory over separatist forces, and the country had been named the Republic of Yemen.

13. Yemen was also surprised at the figures given in the two paragraphs for the number of refugees in the country. Despite the country's scarce resources, the destruction caused by the separatist war and the burden of providing assistance to hundreds of thousands of Yemeni returnees after the Gulf War, and also despite the attendant social and environmental consequences, Yemen had received some 60,000 refugees from Somalia, thousands more from various other countries and many more who had entered its territory illegally, fleeing from tragic situations in the Horn of Africa. In cooperation with UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, his Government was providing all kinds of assistance to those refugees in various camps throughout the country. Its ability to continue providing that support, however, would depend on the generosity of the international community, international and regional organizations and the donor community in general.

14. Although his Government had expressed its willingness to receive refugees within the framework of international conventions and norms and humanitarian law, it was concerned by the flows of refugees that were entering the country illegally. Yemen required support to put an end to illegal immigration into its territory, in the interests of countries of origin, countries of asylum and the refugees themselves. The ideal solution for refugees would be repatriation and reintegration into their societies, but that could be achieved only through concerted efforts by all parties and by finding political solutions. Accordingly, Yemen supported the holding of a regional conference on refugees in the Horn of Africa.

15. UNHCR required every possible support in order to be able to share the burden involved in assisting and repatriating refugees, since the latter usually came from least developed countries. Lastly, Yemen welcomed the UNHCR strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions, which had been very successful throughout the world.

16. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Russian Federation) said that the situation experienced by the Russian Federation since the break-up of the former Soviet Union had made aware of the noble humanitarian work done by UNHCR. Over the past four years, relations between the Russian Federation and UNHCR had been strengthened, especially through the Government's accession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 protocol and, beginning in 1995, its participation in the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High-Commissioner for Refugees which had given it an insight into the successful functioning of the threefold strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions implemented by UNHCR.

17. During that period, his country witnessed the dedication of UNHCR to the ideals of human rights and to eliminating the causes and consequences of the displacement of persons world wide, including in its own territory where there was a strong possibility that the problem was going to become considerably worse. Over 70 million people in the region were living outside their own countries, including almost 25 million Russians living outside the Russian Federation and over 26 million non-Russians living in it.

18. According to calculations by the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, over the next two years more than a million people would return to Russia from the Caucasus region, in addition to a further 2.9 million Russians who had earlier emigrated to the States of Central Asia. Internal conflicts in the Caucasus, Moldova and Central Asia had led to the displacement of over a million people. A further million people had been displaced within the countries of the former Soviet Union as a result of conflicts in the region. The way in which UNHCR was tackling the refugees' problem was consistent with the needs of the Russian Federation, which needed the support of the international community in order to alleviate tensions, prevent conflicts and restore stability, public order and peace in a country that, until recently, had not known democracy.

19. His delegation felt that UNHCR should focus its attention on preventive measures, including measures to prevent human rights violations, and should develop a strategy of prevention and reduction of mass exoduses. His delegation favoured the establishment of a global system for exchanging official information about possible refugee flows, so that the necessary conditions for receiving and assisting such refugees could be prepared in advance, with the active participation of UNHCR, of course. Experience gained with early warning systems in emergency situations should be taken fully into account.

20. His delegation was pleased that the international community had supported the proposal made by the Russian Federation in 1993 that refugee problems should be analyzed in all their aspects and was satisfied that the UNCHR report examined the provision of assistance to stabilize problems of migration and

alleviate the effects of refugee flows, in the context of the elaboration of general guidelines on the movement of persons.

21. His delegation welcomed the constructive participation of UNHCR in providing humanitarian assistance to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Through the UNHCR office in the Russian Federation, an active dialogue had been established between Moscow and Geneva on all questions relating to the UNHCR mandate in that country and the coordination of activities.

22. The holding of a conference on the problems of refugees and other migrants in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was crucial to the fate of millions of people of various ethnic backgrounds and political persuasions. Alleviating the suffering of those people and establishing coordinated methods in order to eliminate difficulties in working with migrants in each country of the Community, based on international human rights norms, was in the best interests of those States and contributed to strengthening civil society. His delegation hoped that the conference would make it possible to analyse problems related to the dynamic of displacement, shed light on displaced persons' most pressing needs in the areas of legal protection and practical assistance, examine problems of prevention and find long-term solutions for those problems.

23. In preparation for the conference, a meeting of experts had been held at Geneva and there had been subregional meetings at Tbilisi, Ashgabat and Kiev. It had been found that the international community was increasingly aware of the problem of migration in the territory of the CIS, and that gave reason to hope that genuine, practical results would be achieved. The wide range of situations and the different ways in which international norms and national laws were being applied to the various migrant groups in countries of the region required the adoption of non-conventional criteria. His delegation hoped that all the countries of the CIS and neighbouring States would participate actively in the preparatory process for the conference, fully aware of the possibilities and the advantages of finding balanced solutions to that important humanitarian problem in a collective, non-confrontational manner. It was also confident that other concerned States and governmental and non-governmental international organizations would participate in the conference. His delegation, along with other sponsors, would be presenting a draft resolution to that effect, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

24. In view of the obvious link between human rights violations, the mass displacement of persons and the emergence of threats to international peace and security, Russia agreed with UNHCR that human rights monitoring must be one of the preventive measures included in plans for United Nations peace-keeping activities and in negotiations on peaceful settlement of disputes, and that safeguarding human rights was closely linked to the protection of refugees.

25. Mr. SANTAPUTRA (Thailand) expressed appreciation to the High Commissioner and her staff for their efforts, in cooperation with the Thai Government, to assist Indo-Chinese refugees, non-refugees and asylum-seekers in Thailand. History had shown that only through multilateral and bilateral cooperation, and in many instances also through the help of a mediator could that problem be relieved, reduced and eventually resolved. The nobleness of purpose and

intention of UNHCR made it an ideal facilitator in certain situations, since its work cut across borders, race, colour, religion, culture, language and even regimes. For all those reasons, it had the full support of his Government.

26. In 1994, Thailand had contributed over $80,000 to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to help victims of the crisis in Rwanda. Of that amount, nearly $50,000 had been designated for UNHCR and non-governmental organizations to assist in the resettlement of returnees and internally displaced Rwandans. His delegation urged other countries to contribute whatever they could in order to show their commitment to the work of UNHCR. Because it was aware of the burden which the problem of refugees and displaced persons could place on a country, Thailand felt that the best solution was repatriation, so that such people could become assets in the rehabilitation and development of their own countries.

27. Thailand's experience as a country of first asylum had taught it the following lessons: (a) countries of origin must facilitate a solution by creating conditions which made returning worthwhile; (b) bona fide refugees should be resettled in third countries, while non-refugees and displaced persons should be repatriated in order to ensure that there were no residual problems in countries of first refuge; (c) countries of first refuge must balance humanitarian concerns with their own security and interests, since the concept of "local settlement" could cause social problems; (d) international burden-sharing regarding refugees could not be overemphasized, since a good settlement programme in third countries and pressure on countries of origin to create a conducive environment for returnees encouraged and gave moral comfort to countries of first refuge; (e) comprehensive plans of action like the one for Indo-Chinese refugees must be negotiated; (f) UNHCR should study the possibility of setting up "safe zones" within countries of origin in order to provide a safe haven for returnees and displaced persons under its non-partisan care; (g) refugees and displaced persons must conform to the laws and regulations of their country of refuge, including lawful measures taken for the maintenance of public order, as stipulated in the conclusions of the thirty-eighth session of the Executive Committee, held in 1987; and (h) the effects of refugees on the environment must be addressed and unnecessary depletion of natural resources should be avoided: education and the dissemination of relevant information could help lessen that problem.

28. In the case of Indo-Chinese refugees, all parties concerned must complete the repatriation programme without delay, in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees which was acknowledged to be the best precedent in dealing with a crisis at regional level. The country of first refuge, the third country for resettlement and particularly the country of origin must share the burden and solve the problem. UNHCR could only help facilitate a solution. The international community, for its part, could help reduce the burden until a solution was found.

29. Mrs. TAY (Togo) said that, despite the seriousness of humanitarian crises and their sometimes incomprehensibly sudden appearance, UNHCR invariably tried to come to the aid of people whose existence was seriously threatened. For that reason, it was necessary to recognize unequivocally the efforts made every day by UNHCR to help thousands of people survive, with the help of the international

community and the voluntary contributions of generous donors. Her delegation noted with concern that UNHCR was looking after 28.7 million refugees and, especially, that more than half of those refugees were on the African continent. It was gratifying that most of the activities carried out during the period under consideration had been directed towards delivering those people from hunger, poverty, violence and even death by providing them with appropriate assistance and help.

30. Her delegation recognized and supported the efforts made to encourage voluntary repatriation and the return of displaced persons to their places of origin, as well as the mechanisms and methods used to reintegrate them into society. The seriousness of the refugee problems in the Great Lakes region had led UNHCR to hold the Bujumbura regional conference, which had culminated in the adoption of a plan of action to limit the consequences of that scourge. She had great respect for those initiatives and the various plans approved, but the international community and the countries concerned must do everything in their power to participate fully and effectively in implementing them.

31. The refugee problem had reached such a level because of the persistence of internal and international conflicts, changes in the political situation, the emergence of democratization processes, and massive violations of human rights. Clearly, the political, economic and social consequences of that problem were not helping to bring about the peace, security and well-being for which mankind yearned. With that in mind, her delegation considered the strategy proposed by UNHCR for strengthening the coordination of humanitarian activities with other United Nations organs and organizations to be a sensible one.

32. The solution should also be a comprehensive one based on prevention, mitigation of damage to the environment and the search for sustainable solutions, which should be based on the political will to protect, defend and promote human rights, guarantee the participation of citizens in government and create an enabling environment for economic and social progress. The achievement of sustainable solutions required national, regional and international solidarity, which meant that financial and human resources exceeding the capacity of a single country or small group of countries had to be mobilized. It was in that light that the international community should view the proposal of the President of Zaire to convene a world conference on that important subject, which had been endorsed by the Thirty-first Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Addis Ababa in June 1995. Togo was of the view that the convening of such a conference would give impetus to the formulation of comprehensive and practical guidelines for dealing with the refugee problem in the best way possible and in the interest of all mankind.

33. With regard to paragraph 92 of the report of the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/50/12), in which reference was made to the situation in Togo, her delegation wished to update the Committee's information by reporting that, following the adoption of the general amnesty referred to in that paragraph, on 12 August 1995, the Government of Togo and UNHCR had signed an agreement in Lomé for the repatriation of Togolese refugees. In order to contribute to the establishment of a UNHCR office in Lomé, the two parties had signed a headquarters agreement on 26 October 1995 to provide the UNHCR representation

with all the facilities and advantages to enable it to fulfil its objectives under optimum conditions. The results achieved thus far could be considered satisfactory.

34. Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus) said that his delegation wished to pay tribute to the dedicated staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organizations who spared no effort in defending refugees and displaced persons and improving their situation. Given the dangers faced by humanitarian personnel in the performance of their tasks, Belarus agreed with Ukraine and Japan, among other countries, that it was necessary to afford them protection within the framework of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. In that connection, it should be recalled that Belarus had been the thirty-fourth State to sign the Convention.

35. Despite the tireless efforts of UNHCR and numerous non-governmental organizations, there were currently more than 27 million refugees and displaced persons throughout the world. Unfortunately, Belarus was no stranger to the influx of refugees into its territory for well-known reasons that were related to the disintegration of the USSR. The situation was made worse by the fact that the borders of many of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States were still not clearly delimited and no clear immigration policies existed.

36. The competent authorities of Belarus were in the process of determining which of the approximately 28,000 persons who had sought refuge in the country during the previous few years should be granted refugee status. Of that number, more than 10,000 were from the Baltic countries, 4,000 were from the Russian Federation and the remainder from the countries of central Asia and the Caucasian region. Nearly half the total number of refugees were of Belorussian origin. For many refugees, Belarus was a country of transit en route to Western Europe and the United States of America. However, given the problems facing countries of asylum, many of those refugees, some of whom were illegal, were not likely to find asylum, which would further exacerbate the refugee problem in Belarus. The number of illegal immigrants currently in the country was estimated to be between 100,000 and 400,000. Many of them were involved in the growing wave of criminal activity which was connected to drug trafficking and smuggling.

37. The situation was a cause of deep concern for the Government of Belarus, which was seeking to develop an appropriate legal framework for regulating immigration. In July 1995, a law on refugees had entered into force and a draft law on migration policy was about to be completed. However, in order to adequately address the problem of refugees and displaced persons, it was necessary to promote cooperation among countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination, an effort that required the participation of the relevant international organizations.

38. The delegation of Belarus commended UNHCR on its activities in the Commonwealth of Independent States on behalf of refugees, stateless persons and displaced persons in the area and supported the proposal to convene a regional conference in mid-1996 to seek a solution to the problem. Belarus wished to reiterate its proposal that the regional conference should be held in Minsk.

The preparations for the conference, in which the International Organization for Migration had actively participated, had made a valuable contribution to the assessment of the real situation in the region. Finally, his delegation wished to give the assurance that the Government of Belarus would continue to support the work of UNHCR, which had just opened a regional office in Minsk.

39. Mr. WILLE (Norway) said that, as the number of persons in need of international protection escalated dramatically, there had been a recognition of the need to more systematically address issues related to such protection in situations of massive emergencies. In that connection, the high priority given to the strengthening of the emergency preparedness and response capacity of UNHCR was most encouraging. Norway also welcomed the call on UNHCR to develop a set of guiding principles to ensure the protection of persons fleeing situations of conflict and who were subsequently unable to return to their countries of origin. The international protection of refugees was the central pillar of the mandate of UNHCR, whose juridical basis continued to be the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Norway called on all States which had not yet done so to accede to those instruments and to implement them fully. In that connection, it should be mentioned that Norway had introduced the concept of temporary protection, as an integral part of its refugee policy, to encourage a phased and orderly approach to repatriation, which should be the aim of any refugee policy, when conditions so permitted

40. Currently, internally displaced persons far outnumbered those considered to be refugees under the 1951 Convention. Norway had advocated in various contexts that the needs of internally displaced persons should be placed on the international agenda. Removing the factors that forced people to flee their homes might prevent internal displacements and refugee flows. The efforts of UNHCR to operationalize the criteria and principles for involvement on behalf of internally displaced persons were therefore welcome.

41. Human rights violations were a major factor in causing the flight of refugees as well as an obstacle to their safe and voluntary return home. Although the Office of the High Commissioner had rightly intensified its cooperation with the United Nations human rights machinery, the responsibility of States to prevent circumstances that gave rise to refugee flows and to promote instead conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation must be underlined. Norway welcomed the conclusions on refugee women which had been adopted at the previous session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR. It was also pleased that the Fourth World Conference on Women, which had been held earlier that year in Beijing, had underlined the need to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women. The challenge now was to ensure that the calls for action were implemented. Norway also strongly supported the efforts of UNHCR to protect and assist refugee children.

42. At its recent session, the Executive Committee had also adopted important decisions on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. In the field of humanitarian relief, the ongoing efforts to achieve the best possible arrangements with implementing partners constituted an important factor for the work of UNHCR. Norway had therefore followed with great interest the "Partnership in Action" process (PARINAC) initiated by UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies. Lastly, his Government

pledged its continued support and cooperation to UNHCR and commended the High Commissioner for the steps taken to modernize the budget structure and establish new working methods for the Executive Committee.

43. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) said that UNHCR had achieved a high level of performance in providing assistance and protection to millions of refugees, displaced persons and others requiring humanitarian assistance throughout the world; in particular, his delegation welcomed the coordination established by UNHCR with other relevant bodies of the United Nations system to respond to complex emergency situations. Improved collaboration between UNHCR and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would assist in raising awareness of the relationship between refugee issues and broader human rights concerns and would also enable UNHCR to perform its fundamental role in the area of protection more efficiently.

44. In the same context, his delegation was encouraged that UNHCR was participating actively in all the meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), since IASC performed a useful role in clarifying mandates and bringing greater coordination to emerging situations. The relationship between UNHCR and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should also be maintained. In the context of inter-agency cooperation, his delegation noted the participation of UNHCR in the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions in the continuum from emergency relief to development.

45. UNHCR was continuing to integrate the particular needs of refugee women and children into its programme planning and implementation. In that respect, he wished to note the activities of the Working Group on Refugee Women and Refugee Children and the decision to create four new posts of Regional Adviser on Refugee Women. His delegation welcomed the efforts that were being made by UNHCR for the identification, registration and tracing of unaccompanied children, and supported the conclusion reached in the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/555) that closer collaboration between UNHCR and UNICEF would help further improve emergency response.

46. In South-East Asia, progress continued to be made in finding a solution to the region's refugee problem, with the valuable assistance and cooperation of UNHCR. However, all the activities under the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees were to be terminated by the end of 1995. For some 20 years, Indonesia and the other countries of first asylum within the region had borne their share of the burden and were continuing to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees. His delegation therefore called upon all the parties concerned to continue their support until the problem was finally resolved.

47. Mr. BADRI (Djibouti) said that currently there were more than 27 million refugees and displaced persons in the world, of whom more than 50 per cent were in Africa. The great majority of refugees were women, children and elderly persons who needed special protection and assistance at a time when financial resources were being exhausted because the traditional generosity which had prevailed throughout the world was disappearing and because some countries, not always the poorest, were beginning to adopt restrictive policies regarding the right of asylum.

48. East Africa, in particular the Horn of Africa, was one of the areas most affected by the problem of refugees. That tragedy, which went back several decades, was a consequence both of the incessant conflicts and of floods and droughts which gave rise to great shortages of food. At the meeting of heads of State of the subregion held in Addis Ababa in 1992 with a view to seeking a lasting solution to that human tragedy, it had been recognized that the only way of finally resolving the problem was not simply through achieving a peaceful solution of conflicts but also, and above all, through improving the economic situation of the countries concerned. Although significant progress had been made in recent years with the return of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, the question of refugees in the Horn of Africa remained the main concern of Governments of the subregion because of the situation in Somalia. Despite some attempts by the international community to provide assistance to Somalia, the problem had not yet been solved. The absence of a Government or administration, the conflicts which had destroyed Somalia, violence and insecurity had forced hundreds of thousands of Somalis to seek permanent refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti.

49. After it had gained independence in 1977, Djibouti had received thousands of refugees fleeing wars. Currently it was hosting over 100,000 refugees and displaced persons. Since Djibouti had a population of 500,000, that was a considerable burden. As a result of that situation, insecurity had increased and, in addition, there was great pressure on the already limited resources and on Djibouti's precarious socio-economic infrastructure. Some 40 per cent of health services were provided to refugees and the employment situation was being affected by the refugees, who were prepared to work for very low wages. Unless a lasting solution was found soon, the problem would also affect Djibouti's political situation.

50. Despite appeals for assistance to the international community, to which there had been no response, and the difficulties it was facing, Djibouti had never opted for a policy of restriction or closure of its borders. Djibouti, in cooperation with UNHCR, had encouraged the voluntary repatriation of refugees when conditions in the country of repatriation permitted. Unfortunately, those operations were constantly interrupted because of the lack of the necessary resources. The only possible solution to that tragic situation was to provide substantial assistance to the asylum countries in the region and to help Somalia. It was not enough to provide humanitarian assistance to combat hunger; Somalia must be helped in re-establishing its institutions, reconstituting its infrastructure and starting up its economy. It was only then that it would be possible for the region to regain the political and social stability which was essential for economic development.

51. Djibouti endorsed the Secretary-General's comment in his report on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa that "the persistence of population movements and refugee flows calls for a comprehensive approach focusing on three principal elements: prevention, the adverse impact of refugees on asylum countries, and the search for durable solutions" (A/50/413, para. 10). A good economic situation was the best preventive. Many conflicts arose because of the conditions of poverty in which the population lived; such conflicts could be avoided by providing development assistance according to countries' needs, instead of spending millions of dollars on the

distribution of humanitarian aid or the organization of conferences for reconciliation.

52. Mr. LUKABU (Zaire) said that owing to its geographical location, his country had faced refugee problems since gaining its independence because it shared borders with nine African countries which had, on various occasions, sent streams of refugees to its territory. Since 1959 the largest number of massive flows of refugees seeking asylum in Zaire had come from the Great Lakes region. The presence of nearly three million refugees, who had entered Zaire as a result of the tragic events in Rwanda and Burundi, represented an unparalleled challenge and burden for the Government and population of his country.

53. His delegation was disappointed that the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had failed to mention the sacrifices made by his country and its people. According to the statement by the President of the Republic of Zaire on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, while the 15 countries of the European Union had accepted onto their territory 700,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia, Zaire had welcomed more than two million refugees. Despite the hospitality, generosity and humanity it had shown, Zaire alone had been criticized rather than supported by the international community. Zaire would never agree to be made the scapegoat; nor was it willing to mortgage the security, development and equilibrium of its population in order to keep hundreds of thousands of refugees on its territory for an indefinite period of time. The international community could not remain indifferent to the suffering of Zaire and then criticize it for its decision to return refugees to their country of origin.

54. With regard to the question of local settlement to which reference was made in the report (A/50/12, paras. 53 to 55), and according to the previously mentioned statement by the President of the Republic, Zaire refused to be an accomplice to the policy being implemented by Rwanda and Burundi which would transform the vast majority of Zaire's eastern territory into Hutu land. Along with the President, the Zairian Government, Parliament and population vigorously rejected the idea of "local settlement" recommended in the report. The question of installing the Rwandese Hutus on the territory of Zaire in order to placate the Tutsi authority in Kigali was of great importance for his country and one on which his Government had taken a clear position. In a decision adopted on 28 April 1995, the High Council of the Republic, the transitional parliament, bearing in mind all the adverse consequences for the Zairians which resulted from the presence of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi, including ecological problems, criminal acts and attempts to dominate the indigenous inhabitants, had decided to demand the unconditional return, without delay, of all refugees and immigrants from those countries. He hoped that the international community, without neglecting Tanzania which was faced with similar difficulties, would mobilize support to help Zaire deal with the consequences arising from the excessively prolonged stay of the refugees in one of the most beautiful areas of the country.

55. Mr. HAMZA (Iraq) said that refugees were an international responsibility because the problem affected both the country of origin and the international community as a whole, which must offer protection. In that regard UNHCR played

a noteworthy role in providing assistance to refugees and alleviating their suffering.

56. With regard to the UNHCR report (A/50/12), and in particular the reference to Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, his country had never been in a situation where its citizens migrated to other countries as refugees. On the contrary, it had always offered asylum and refuge to individuals arriving on its territory. Iraqis were leaving the country as a direct consequence of the exceptional circumstances created by the unjust United Nations embargo and, before that, the military aggression carried out by the international alliance against his country. The economic embargo, which was no longer justified since Iraq had complied with the relevant resolutions, had caused a serious shortage of food and medicine, producing a substantial decline in the quality of life of the Iraqi people, some of whom had been obliged to leave the country in search of better conditions, hoping to return when the situation improved. In addition, in the country's northern region, internal struggles between local factions had led to another exodus of citizens to neighbouring countries. In order to resolve that problem, interference in the internal affairs of the country must cease so that it could re-establish the conditions of security and stability needed for the return of the refugees.

57. One of the adverse consequences of sanctions was obviously the displacement of thousands of specialized workers who had been forced to leave the country. The international community should give careful thought to the validity of the system of sanctions and seek new mechanisms which could mitigate the serious consequences of their arbitrary imposition. The United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council and human rights bodies, must examine the question of the relationship between migration and development with a view to promoting the development of countries whose economic circumstances were giving rise to emigration. Reaffirmation was also needed of the importance of assistance from developed countries to the developing countries to help them achieve the technical and economic capacities conducive to development and progress. The Iraqi citizens who had been forced to leave their country would return when the embargo was raised. His Government therefore urged the United Nations to consider the possibility of ending or reducing the economic sanctions, since there was no longer any justification for maintaining them.

58. Mrs. KARINA (Latvia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply and on behalf of her country and Lithuania, said that she welcomed the information provided by the representative of Belarus, in particular that portion concerning the Baltic States. The representative of Belarus had said that in recent years approximately 28,000 individuals had sought refugee status in Belarus, mainly persons from the Baltic States, the Russian Federation, Central Asia and the region of the Caucasus. In the view of Latvia and Lithuania, the population flow from the Baltic States to Belarus was a result of the return of individuals of Belarus origin to their homeland. Latvia and Lithuania appreciated the efforts of the Belarus authorities to give careful scrutiny to each case in order to distinguish between refugees and those who were going back to their country as returnees.

59. Mrs. INTELMANN (Estonia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that she had taken note with interest of the number of persons who had sought

refugee status in Belarus in recent years. The breakup of the Soviet Union had clearly given rise to a substantial flow of refugees, due in part to the desire of many persons to return to their country of origin. The Government of Estonia was studying that question thoroughly and, as a sign of its good will and so that individuals could exercise their right to return to their country of origin, had established a special fund for that purpose.

60. Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus), speaking in exercise of the right of reply and after having welcomed the preceding statements, said that his Government had not referred to Baltic refugees when it had spoken of the 10,000 former inhabitants of the Baltic States who, in accordance with national law in Belarus, had simply presented their requests for refugee status in Belarus. Many of those individuals might well be repatriated once the Government had reviewed their request, since refugee status could not be granted to all applicants. He wished to reiterate that the requests were being carefully examined, on a case-by-case basis.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
24th meeting
held on
Friday, 10 November 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

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AGENDA ITEM 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*

AGENDA ITEM 165: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/50/SR.24
27 November 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

95-82182 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/50/3, A/50/38, A/50/110, A/50/163, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/257/Rev.1-E/1995/61/Rev.1, A/50/346, A/50/369, A/50/378, A/50/398, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/538 and A/50/691)

AGENDA ITEM 165: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1)

1. Mrs. MONGELLA (Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women) said that she would make her introductory statement in due course when all the documentation on the two agenda items was available.

2. Mrs. DUEÑAS-LOZA (Acting Director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) said that the Institute's report (A/50/538) provided information on its programme framework and activities, which had been defined by the INSTRAW Board of Trustees as priority programmes for the biennium and had been carried out despite the drastic institutional and financial restrictions imposed. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in September in Beijing, had been the most significant international event for women in the past decade. The Platform for Action adopted there established a concrete plan for the advancement of women, expressing the firm commitment to finding lasting solutions to the major problems affecting women and laying the groundwork for a society based on equity, equality and peace.

3. The objectives of the social, economic and technical strategies addressing the conditions of women in poor rural and marginal urban areas were to provide an immediate remedy for their survival needs, help them find economic options that improve their conditions, and propose strategies to achieve sustainable food security, safe energy sources, clean water, sanitation, and secure income to alleviate extreme poverty.

4. The Institute's plan for the biennium 1996-1997 would be guided by the Beijing Platform for Action, would be based on regional priorities and would build upon the recommendations put forward by the recent major United Nations conferences. It would also incorporate the basic goals of the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held in 1996. The biennial work programme would focus on four thematic areas: economic and political empowerment for women; women, environment and sustainable development; women, media and the new communication and information technologies; and gender statistics and indicators. The economic and political empowerment research programme was oriented towards enabling women to increase their capacity to overcome the marginal condition in which they lived. Recognizing the importance of women's access to credit and other financial resources as a means of eradicating poverty, INSTRAW would promote an international campaign to improve women's access to credit worldwide. As part of its preparations for Habitat II, the Institute would organize an expert group meeting in early 1996 on women's habitat in zones of conflict.

5. The emergence of sustainability as a new development criterion and the new insights into the linkages between population growth, environment and development required substantial institutional change and technological innovation. Many of the challenges confronting society with respect to sustainable development, environment and security were closely linked to natural resources management. Those challenges required a major shift away from the business-as-usual approach, which had fundamental limitations. Women were largely absent from natural resources management and decision-making structures and were further marginalized owing to their lack of access to information, technology and economic resources. They must participate in the planning and implementation of environmental policies and programmes that affected them. Research was needed to promote women's access to appropriate technologies and economic resources.

6. INSTRAW would conduct research on ways to use emerging communication and information technologies as tools for the advancement of women and also study the extent to which women's organizations were using new technologies to gain access to information and as a tool for networking. On the basis of that research, a manual on the use of those technologies for research, training, networking and advocacy would be developed for women's organizations.

7. The Institute's programme on gender statistics and indicators was aimed at improving existing and developing new statistical concepts and methodologies, and applying them. The Institute would continue to improve the concepts and methods used to quantify the remunerated and unremunerated work of women and men. Its research would also be targeted to improving methods of data collection for measuring poverty among women and men and to developing statistical methods to improve data on women's human rights. The Institute would continue to address the specific situation of elderly women and would participate in 1996 in preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (1999). The Institute would convene an international conference for researchers and policy makers by the end of 1997. Research was needed to address the specific situations of young girls, the elderly, migrant women, refugees, internally displaced women and those in situations of armed conflict.

8. She stressed that local, regional and international networking would be only as effective as the level of commitment by each component to improving the status of women.

9. Ms. KING (Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), speaking on the question of the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, said that the Secretary-General's report on that subject (A/50/691) should be considered in conjunction with the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/50/540), which gave additional details about women in the United Nations. Table 1 of the former report showed that, during the period under review, the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had increased modestly from 32.6 per cent to 34 per cent. The percentage of women at the D-1 level through the Under-Secretary-General level had increased from 15 per cent to 17 per cent, still well below the target of 25 per cent set for 1995. The percentage of women in posts with special language requirements, as indicated in table 2, had remained virtually the same. For the first time, a higher proportion of women than men

had been promoted, 51.2 per cent, showing more consistent commitment on the part of managers and the appointment and promotion bodies concerned. Table 4 indicated the percentage of women appointed by level. The overall percentage was 44.4.

10. Despite those changes, obstacles to the improvement of the status of women existed at all levels, including those at the General Service levels, who constituted 57.8 per cent of that category. Obstacles existed in terms of career development, mobility and conditions of service that would permit more easily the notion of dual careers for women. In the area of harassment, including sexual harassment, data would be collected to assess the extent and nature of the problem and to revise guidelines and sanctions for more effectively dealing with incidents.

11. One of the most important developments within the United Nations common system was the statement of commitment by the heads of all the United Nations agencies and organizations at the session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in February 1995. The statement addressed measures to facilitate the recruitment of women, encourage their mobility, promote a supportive work environment and foster the necessary attitudinal changes. ACC also underscored management commitment to the goals of gender balance and stressed that particular attention must be paid to increasing the number of women in senior managerial positions. Accordingly, women from any of the common system organizations could apply to any of the others. Also important was the commitment to continue work on spouse employment and facilitating mobility, and more modern mechanisms for enhancing productivity, while taking into account the realities of women's and men's responsibilities at work and at home.

12. The culmination of the year had taken place at the Beijing Conference on Women, which had reaffirmed the targets of 50 per cent women in posts subject to geographical distribution and 50 per cent women in senior managerial levels, both by the year 2000. Those two targets had been endorsed by the General Assembly in the context of its call, in resolution 49/167, for the implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000).

13. The Beijing Platform for Action, the strategic plan and the consolidated measures to improve the status of women (A/50/691, para. 30) should provide for the first time an integrated basis for assessing progress in achieving the overall targets for women in the Secretariat. Much needed to be done to meet those daunting challenges, particularly the target of 50 per cent women overall and in the highest management levels by the year 2000.

14. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), speaking on item 165, said that the Beijing Platform for Action, in calling on Governments to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and to adopt concrete measures to empower women and promote gender equality, strengthened crucial agreements reached at previous forums. It had, however, gone further in affirming that women's human rights included the right to control matters related to their sexuality, thus making a break with value systems that had used women's reproductive role to oppress and degrade them. The new vision protected women's right to reproductive health and called for

shared responsibility between men and women in matters relating to reproductive behaviour. It further recognized the importance of equal access to land credit and rewarding employment, of women's participation in decision-making and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

15. At the Secretary-General's request, an Inter-Agency Task Force had been set up to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) of which she had been Secretary-General. Under that initiative, a working group on women's empowerment, with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as the lead agency, had met in May 1995 with a view to following up the recommendations of the Beijing Conference. It had developed proposals for inter-agency cooperation at the country level to eliminate gender disparity and promote women's leadership roles and had issued guidelines on women's empowerment for use by United Nations resident coordinators to facilitate gender-sensitive development policies.

16. UNFPA was committed to advocating all the objectives set out in the Platform for Action and would provide financial and programme support in the areas of health, equality for girls, women's legal rights, elimination of traditional practices harmful to women and prevention of violence against women. A commitment to gender equality underlay all its programmes and actions, as did a commitment to expanding its partnerships with women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations. It was also committed to promoting gender equality within the Fund and the United Nations system as a whole; UNFPA already had a high proportion of women among its professional staff and in senior-level positions.

17. UNFPA was working to build up the capacity of women's non-governmental organizations through skill and leadership training, and it would continue to work with UNIFEM to strengthen non-governmental organizations with regard to human rights. Women and women's organizations were mobilized as never before; they would work with international organizations and with decision makers in their own countries and ensure that men were equal partners in the process.

18. The Beijing Conference and the conferences leading up to it had been very successful and had been vital to the process of forging consensus on a strategic agenda. The time had come for a vigorous follow-up.

19. Ms. HEYZER (Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the Beijing Platform for Action had further expanded the agenda for women's empowerment and women's rights. UNIFEM provided what support it could to ensure that grass-roots women had the skills and opportunities to be active players in international policy setting. The challenge before it was to put into practice women's vision of a transformed world that would ensure equality, peace and well-being for all.

20. In accordance with the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, the Fund's resources were used as a catalyst to ensure the involvement of women in mainstream development and to support innovative activities benefiting women in line with national and regional priorities, such as the reduction of poverty, food security, environment, actions to prevent violence against women and women's political participation.

21. In the period following the Beijing Conference on Women, UNIFEM would focus its operational work on economic empowerment, for which women must have control over economic resources and assets, and political empowerment, for which women must have control over their lives and be decision makers.

22. UNIFEM had had 20 years of experience in over 65 developing countries in identifying emerging gender issues developing innovative approaches and strategies for addressing critical issues affecting women, applying a gender perspective to development interventions, working with women's organizations, supporting innovative operational programmes benefiting women and acting as a catalyst within the United Nations system to bring about women's empowerment.

23. The work of UNIFEM had ranged from grass-roots projects that improved working conditions for women to public education campaigns and the design of new census and marketing systems. Its successes included innovative projects benefiting women, such as pioneering the use of loan funds to make credit available to women; incorporating women into mainstream development; and building partnerships and networks among women, Governments and the international community in order to strengthen the position of women in science and technology, to institutionalize gender-sensitive financial services for women and to combat domestic and sexual violence. Its experiences at various United Nations conferences had demonstrated the importance of creating new political spaces where consensus could be forged.

24. UNIFEM had been discussing with the United Nations Development Programme the strengthening of technical support to United Nations resident coordinators in order to assist in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the national level, and would continue to work closely with UNFPA on women's empowerment. The Beijing Conference had endorsed the mission of UNIFEM and had specifically stated that it should be given adequate resources for carrying out its functions; she drew attention to the fact that the baseline funding that supported women's empowerment was low and that UNIFEM needed additional resources.

25. Ms. ENGELBRECHT (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, and supported by Mr. AGGREY (Ghana), Mrs. BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas), on behalf of a number of Caribbean countries, Mrs. TAVARES DE ÁLVAREZ (Dominican Republic), Mr. FERNÁNDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba), Mrs. MSUYA (United Republic of Tanzania), Mrs. SUBIRATS (Spain), on behalf of the European Union, Mrs. LEGWAILA (Botswana), Mr. COLOMA (Chile), Mrs. CHIGAGA (Zambia), Ms. NZENZA (Zimbabwe), Mrs. MESDOUA (Algeria), Ms. LIMJUCO (Philippines) and Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria), expressed disappointment at the lack of the relevant documents for agenda items 107 and 165 which precluded the possibility of any meaningful debate during the current meeting. They proposed that the discussion should be suspended until steps had been taken to remedy that situation.

The meeting rose at noon.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
25th meeting
held on
Friday, 10 November 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. TSHERING	(Bhutan)
later:	Mrs. TAVARES DE ÁLVAREZ (Vice-Chairman)	(Dominican Republic)
later:	Mr. TSHERING (Chairman)	(Bhutan)

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AGENDA ITEM 105: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 106: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/50/SR.25
29 December 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

95-82200 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/12 and Add.1, A/50/413, A/50/414, A/50/555 and A/50/275-S/1995/555)

1. Mr. RODRIGO (Sri Lanka) said that despite the vast scale and spread of humanitarian problems relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had accomplished much throughout the world, in cooperation with the countries directly involved, thanks to the practical approach which it used.

2. The dedication and determination shown by the High Commissioner and her staff in many trying, even desperate situations deserved recognition. The situation was not, however, completely bleak, because some 2 million persons had returned home in safety and dignity to countries like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Myanmar. The commencement of a peace process in the former Yugoslavia offered reasonable hope for resolution of the plight of the refugees and displaced persons in that country. At the previous meeting of the Working Group on Humanitarian Issues of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, it had been agreed that UNHCR should carry on as coordinator of humanitarian assistance following a peaceful settlement.

3. Referring to the UNHCR report (A/50/12, para. 133), she said that the return from India to Sri Lanka of Senegalese refugees had been greatly facilitated by the practical assistance rendered by UNHCR in keeping with its essentially humanitarian and non-political character, and she indicated that the repatriation programme was continuing on a slow but steady course.

4. She drew attention to the current problem of the forced displacement of persons within Sri Lanka and attributed that situation to the actions of a secessionist group called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which earlier in 1995 had turned its back on the option for settling the country's ethnic issues through a process of peaceful negotiations, an option freely supported by all other political parties and groups in the country and welcomed by the international community. That group, afraid of losing control of Jafna and its population, had ordered the forcible evacuation of the city.

5. The Government of Sri Lanka had endeavoured to reduce to the absolute minimum the hardships forced on the peoples concerned, and to that end it had taken steps to ensure that they received food, medicine and other essential items without interruption and in sufficient quantities, although the aforementioned secessionist group was diverting a substantial part of that assistance for its own war effort. Nevertheless, the Government had held discussions with the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure the uninterrupted distribution of supplies and had established a focal point for coordination which would channel assistance from those agencies and organizations whose aid the Government might choose to enlist. The efforts of the Sri Lankan Government had been duly appreciated by the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons.

6. Mrs. Tavares de Álvarez (Dominican Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

7. Mr. ADWAN (Jordan) said that in recent times the world had witnessed an alarming increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons, which was taxing the capacity of UNHCR to fulfil its mandate. Jordan was interested in the refugee and displaced persons issue because it was the country in which the largest number of Palestinian refugees lived, refugees who had arrived in three waves since 1948, and who were an additional burden on the country's public services and infrastructure.

8. His delegation believed that the Palestinian refugee problem was a fundamentally political one and its result was a human tragedy. His delegation would treat the Palestinian problem in detail in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee when it studied the report of the High Commissioner of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

9. After praising the work of UNHCR and its staff in alleviating the refugee situations which had resulted from the problems in the Great Lakes region of Africa, the former Yugoslavia and other areas, he said that Jordan supported the Office's implementation of the triple strategy of preparation, prevention and solution in emergency situations.

10. Referring to the burden represented by the refugee problem for some host countries, he stressed that the problem was aggravated by the fact that some of those host countries were among the poorest countries and were faced with chronic economic problems. He pointed out the importance of the work of UNHCR in coordinating the assistance provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations with the setting up of development programmes in those countries, which placed humanitarian questions within a development perspective.

11. The preservation of human dignity was a fundamental value. Accordingly, he stressed the need to link refugee problems with more general human rights interests. In that context it was important that current mechanisms be reinforced, including the establishment of international tribunals to judge the alleged violators of human rights and humanitarian law.

12. His Government was convinced that one of the most important tasks was that of guaranteeing adequate supplies of food and medicine to refugees, especially vulnerable groups like the elderly, children and women. It was proud of its participation in the peace-keeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mozambique, Angola and other parts of the world.

13. He underlined the role of non-governmental organizations in providing assistance to refugees to alleviate the suffering of innocent victims and referred to the humanitarian work undertaken by the Hashemite Humanitarian Assistance Committee. Finally, he said that States were currently faced with a choice: to be part of a harmonious international system whose regional and

international efforts were based on human morality, or to remain indifferent to sedition, ethnic cleansing and ideological hostility.

14. Mr. AMOR (Tunisia) reaffirmed Tunisia's commitment to provide all necessary assistance to United Nations refugee-related activities. The humanitarian crises and their brutality, especially in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, were unacceptable human tragedies. Fully aware of the seriousness of those problems and of their political, economic and social consequences, his delegation had studied in detail the UNHCR report and welcomed the efforts made to encourage repatriation in various regions. It also welcomed the improvement in the prospects for voluntary repatriation which had resulted from the regional conferences organized by UNHCR, which had facilitated the approval of concrete plans of action.

15. He was pleased to note the return to their homeland of a large number of Mozambican, Ethiopian and Chadian refugees as well as preparations for the voluntary repatriation programme for Togolese refugees. He also hoped that similar solutions could be found so that Malian and Angolan refugees would have the same opportunity.

16. He was especially concerned by the strikingly large number of refugees and displaced persons being cared for by UNHCR and by the fact that Africa accounted for nearly half of the total. Most of those persons were women and children who had been the principal victims of mass exoduses. He believed that protection for those vulnerable groups should be reinforced and that they should be guaranteed treatment without discrimination in the refugee camps.

17. It was essential for the international community to define and implement a global approach to refugee problems, based on prevention, the reduction of the negative effects of the presence of refugees on the host country and the search for durable solutions, in order to alleviate the suffering of millions of human beings and prevent other humanitarian crises. His delegation was fully convinced that economic development alone was not enough to prevent humanitarian crises, and that political efforts were required to promote respect for human rights, the rule of law and responsible management of public affairs. Host countries were generally experiencing serious economic difficulties, which were aggravated by the influx of refugees. The international community should show solidarity towards those countries, since durable solutions to such problems required the mobilization of substantial financial and human resources, exceeding the capacity of any one State or of a small group of States.

18. Durable solutions must be found, and repatriation could be successful only if the political situation was such that it favoured the re-establishment of peace and the reconstruction of countries and societies in crisis. An integrated approach to political, humanitarian and development issues was needed in order to solve the problems of refugees, and UNHCR had devoted laudable efforts to promoting such a approach.

19. He urged the international community to respond effectively to the refugee problem and reiterated that efficient interventions and durable results required proper coordination of UNHCR activities in emergency situations with the activities of other United Nations organizations.

20. Mr. SY (Observer for the Organization of African Unity) said that the question of refugees, returnees and displaced persons had always figured prominently on the agenda of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), not only because a third of those people were hosted by Africa but also because OAU was very much concerned by the suffering and misery endured by the millions of uprooted Africans living a life of precarity, uncertainty, dependency, fear and deprivation.

21. The refugee crisis in Africa was not only a humanitarian problem but a source of insecurity and tension and a serious obstacle to subregional and regional economic cooperation and integration. It also necessitated the use of important human, material and environmental resources. It was therefore necessary to attack the root causes of the continuing flows of refugees. Taking that into account, the African heads of State and Government had put forward three priorities in their 1990 declaration on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa, namely, the speedy resolution of all conflicts on the continent, the further democratization of African societies and the promotion of African economic recovery, development and integration.

22. OAU had set up a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, which was currently operating with a view to finding peaceful solutions to the major conflicts afflicting Africa, particularly in Burundi, Liberia and Somalia. The post-cold-war era had unleashed disintegrative forces which had created conflicts; that called for a permanent role for regional organizations in the prevention and settlement of those conflicts. However, the requirements of large-scale emergencies such as those in Somalia and Rwanda were beyond the capacity of any regional organization. OAU had therefore given priority to the enhancement of its cooperation with the United Nations in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, as well as its conflict resolution capacity.

23. In its efforts to find lasting solutions to refugee problems, OAU had done everything possible to ensure implementation of the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, it disseminated material on human rights and supported the work of the OAU Commission on Human and People's Rights. It was also promoting an accelerated economic growth and recovery programme. It was not a mere coincidence that the prolonged economic recession of the 1980s had been followed by a period of political strife, ethnic violence and civil wars. Socio-economic development was thus one of the keys to the long-term solution of the refugee crisis.

24. OAU had also undertaken specific actions to encourage the voluntary return of refugees to their places of origin. For example, in February 1995, it had organized, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a regional conference on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region, held in Bujumbura. UNHCR had made laudable efforts in the preparation and holding of that conference, but the same could not be said of the rest of the international community, which had failed to respond with sufficient resources. In the same context, the OAU Council of Ministers had supported the proposal to convene a

regional conference on peace, security, stability and development, with a view to attacking the root causes of the refugee problem in the Great Lakes region.

25. It was necessary to strengthen the operational capacity of the United Nations in the area of human rights. That effort should include operationalizing the international tribunals designed to prosecute the perpetrators of grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law. In addition, the obstacles barring access to asylum, at times based on racial and xenophobic attitudes, should be removed.

26. As far as resources were concerned, his delegation had been pleased to note that in 1994, a change had occurred in the downward trend in the funding of UNHCR general programmes. However, resources for special operations were far less than what was needed. Concerning the particular case of Africa, the countries of the region had shown enormous generosity in granting asylum to the millions of refugees and displaced persons, the majority of whom were women, children and the elderly. However, the symptoms of hospitality fatigue in the host countries were increasingly evident, not because of any change of attitude, but rather because the burden of that generosity was becoming heavier and the means of sustaining it were constantly diminishing. The international community should therefore fulfil its commitment to the countries of asylum to alleviate the difficult situation of refugees.

27. A number of OAU member States had made considerable efforts to encourage the voluntary repatriation of refugees. However, a permanent solution to the problem required a global approach taking into account the various dimensions of the crisis, an effective cooperation among the actors and new and more effective ways of mobilizing resources.

28. Mr. NOGUERA (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, recalled that by its resolution 49/137, dated 19 December 1994, the General Assembly had reiterated its appreciation to UNHCR for the assistance it had provided to Central America. That valuable international support and solidarity committed the countries of the region to redouble their efforts to carry out the process of repatriation and resettlement of refugees in the most rapid and orderly way possible. The resolution referred to a number of initiatives which had been undertaken in order to attain those objectives, such as the Declaration of Commitments in Favour of the Populations Affected both by Uprootedness and by Conflicts and Extreme Poverty, within the Framework of Consolidating Peace in Central America; the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America; and the International Conference on Central American Refugees.

29. Although more than a year had passed since the conclusion of the process begun by that Conference, in which UNHCR had acted as lead agency, the situation still called for efforts by the Governments of the region and support from UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations system as a whole, as well as the work being done in the region by non-governmental organizations, so that it would be possible to carry out the activities designed to provide an integrated response to programmes of self-sufficiency, reintegration, and repatriation with economic reincorporation of refugees and displaced persons.

30. It should be noted that the six Central American States were parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and that they implemented its provisions without geographical limits. It was regrettable that a large number of countries had still not acceded to those two instruments, including countries of origin and receiving countries. The countries of Central America were also concerned at the trend among developed countries to be increasingly strict in granting asylum.

31. With regard to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/50/12), the countries of Central America had noted with concern the increase in refugee flows in various parts of the world, especially as that phenomenon was mostly affecting women and children. Nevertheless, it was encouraging that the situation had been considered a high priority at the Fourth World Conference on Women and that there was an international consensus on the need to take specific measures to deal with it. The countries of Central America urged the donor community and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue supporting the work of UNHCR aimed at resolving that sensitive issue.

32. Mr. HABIYAREMYE (Rwanda) said that when people talked of refugees, attention was focused on Africa and, particularly, the Great Lakes region, which included Rwanda, a country that had recently witnessed the massive exodus of its people to neighbouring countries as a result of war and, especially, genocide. Explaining the current phenomenon of Rwandan refugees, he said that the former regime had waged a propaganda campaign to make it appear that the population was spontaneously fleeing the country before the advance of the Rwanda Patriotic Army, which announced a political change resulting from the liberation struggle of the Rwanda Patriotic Front and other political forces which had refused to obey the order to eliminate ethnic Tutsis and to kill Hutu political opponents.

33. As a precaution against possible political and military defeat, the members of the old regime had determined to displace the whole population in order to cover their retreat and at the same time conceal the extent of the genocide and killings, which had cost the lives of more than one million people in barely three months. In that way, a human shield had been formed which, by its sheer size, continued to protect the real criminals. It was regrettable that some members of the international community had fallen into that trap.

34. It was difficult to understand how the statistics of the humanitarian organizations invariably showed the same number of two million Rwandan refugees since the beginning of the massive exodus, when it was clear that some of the organizations, especially those responsible for repatriation, continued to supply data on returnees in order to justify having been in Rwanda for over a year. Its a serious political argument that should be clarified once and for all, in order to put an end to all speculation and manipulation. To do that, two questions had to be asked. First, if UNHCR needed to know the exact number of refugees so that it could administer humanitarian aid more effectively, the reluctance of the refugees to participate in the relevant census had to be explained. Second, if UNHCR knew the number of people in each camp at the end of March 1995, as was claimed in paragraph 54 of document A/50/413 on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, a reason had to be given

for not making the exact numbers of Rwandan refugees in each country and each camp available to the international community.

35. His Government reiterated its determination to do everything in its power to facilitate the safe return of all refugees, in accordance with the Declaration of Bujumbura and the various tripartite agreements between Rwanda, UNHCR and each of the neighbouring countries sheltering Rwandan refugees, namely, Zaire, Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania. Every effort would be made to ensure that all Rwandans enjoyed the same rights of citizenship and government protection.

36. With regard to the loss of momentum in voluntary repatriation, paragraph 101 of the report of the High Commissioner (A/50/12) referred to an increase in the number of security incidents in Rwanda, the high number of arrests of alleged participants in the 1994 genocide and the absence of a credible judicial system. As far as the incidents mentioned were concerned, they were part of the overall problem of the security situation in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, which could be attributed to the lack of implementation of the recommendations on the issue made at the regional summit on Rwanda, held in Nairobi, and at the Regional Conference held in Bujumbura. Those recommendations referred to the need to separate ordinary refugees from the alleged participants in the genocide and the groups which were intimidating refugees in the camps. Clearly, the implementation of those recommendations fell to the countries of asylum and not to the Rwandan side.

37. On the subject of the high number of arrests, it had to be pointed out that they were in proportion to the range of crimes committed and the number of perpetrators. All those who took part in criminal activities had to be arrested if the principles of a State based on the rule of law, which involved respect for human rights and the elimination of impunity, were to be upheld.

38. Although the absence of a credible judicial system was patently obvious, in the light of his Government's constant efforts, not without success, to restore its judicial system as quickly as possible, it was unjust to claim that the country had done nothing to try to ensure that its judicial system not only inspired confidence but also functioned effectively.

39. His delegation put forward the following recommendations to the international community with the aim of tackling the problem of the Rwandan refugees. First, it should demand that the former members of the armed forces and other paramilitary forces sheltering in the countries bordering on Rwanda in the guise of Rwandan refugees should be totally disarmed without delay. The international community should also ensure that all State property was returned to Rwanda, which would help to stabilize Rwanda in particular, and the whole subregion in general.

40. Second, the international community should play an active part in restoring Rwanda's judicial system and in bringing into operation the International Tribunal for Rwanda, while collaborating with the Government in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 978 (1995) on the arrest and detention of alleged participants in the genocide. Third, the receiving countries should encourage refugees to return voluntarily to their

countries of origin; in the meantime they should continue to supply them with aid, with the support of the international community, for the sake of security throughout the region as well as for the benefit of the refugees themselves. Lastly, the international community should continue to participate in the resettlement of refugees and the reconstruction of Rwanda's social and economic infrastructure.

41. His delegation was deeply grateful to the international community for the demonstrations of solidarity shown towards its country in general and the Rwandan refugees in particular. The initiatives taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, especially her recent visit to the region, were particularly noteworthy. It was to be hoped that her first-hand knowledge would allow her to stimulate greater interest on the part of the international community in the search for quick and appropriate solutions to the problem of the Rwandan refugees.

42. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria) expressed his satisfaction with the measures taken by UNHCR with respect to refugees and displaced persons and his frustration at the fact that the problem affected as many as 28 million people. The unprecedented increase in the numbers of refugees was due largely to the rapid political, economic and social changes that had taken place in the world. Nationalism, ethnic, religious or tribal strife and territorial claims had engendered a chronically unstable situation. Moreover, macroeconomic factors which lay beyond the control of the countries of the southern hemisphere, where the vast majority of refugee populations were to be found, had impoverished those countries even further, leading to massive outflows of people seeking better living conditions.

43. It was necessary to combat the deep-seated problems which had given rise to refugee movements. His delegation endorsed the view of the High Commissioner for Refugees that a political and economic solution must be found to the problems causing population displacement and, therefore, he strongly supported the three-fold strategy of UNHCR of intervention, prevention and solutions. The success of that strategy would require the support of Governments, United Nations agencies and the competent governmental and non-governmental organizations.

44. Bearing in mind that refugee problems continued to worsen in Africa and were beyond the capacity of UNHCR, Algeria endorsed the latter's call for increased assistance to Africa and for the United Nations organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), international financing institutions and the international community, to take concerted action to resolve the crisis.

45. Algeria, in keeping with its tradition of hospitality, had offered asylum to Saharan refugees who were waiting for the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara to be fully implemented with the help of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Algeria's humanitarian action was carried out in conjunction with assistance from UNHCR and international assistance provided on a bilateral basis by public and private agencies from various countries to Saharan refugees who hoped to return to their homeland in free and safe conditions under the auspices of UNHCR, in accordance with the repatriation

scheme provided for in the Settlement Plan. Algeria hoped that UNHCR would increase its assistance to that population in the future.

46. Algeria had also provided humanitarian assistance to people from Mali and Niger who had taken refuge in its territory. In the case of the refugees from Mali, implementation of a joint plan of action involving Mali, UNHCR and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had been initiated in 1994 to help with the return and reintegration of refugees. With respect to the refugees from Niger, following consultations between the Governments of Niger and Algeria, UNHCR and IFAD, a protocol agreement had been adopted on a plan of action on refugees which would make it possible to solve the outstanding practical problems in order to enable the refugees to return to their home country under the best possible conditions.

47. Mrs. PHAM (Viet Nam) said that Viet Nam had not been immune to the overwhelming refugee crisis which had affected the entire world and had worsened in recent years as a result of poverty, regional or internal armed conflicts, political, economic and social crises, violence and intolerance. The Vietnamese people had suffered more than half a century of destructive wars, natural disasters and decades of economic embargo. Hence, a significant number of people had left their homes and fled to neighbouring countries in the hope of resettling in third countries.

48. At the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees held in Geneva in 1989, a Comprehensive Plan of Action had been adopted whereby countries of first asylum had the responsibility of screening Vietnamese asylum-seekers to determine if they qualified for refugee status. Under the terms of the Plan, some Governments had agreed to resettle those determined to be refugees whereas those not accepted were supposed to return to Viet Nam. Since then, Viet Nam, UNHCR and the other countries concerned had effectively implemented the Comprehensive Plan of Action, which had helped to put an end to the clandestine departures from the country. Between 1989 and 1995, 72,611 people had been voluntarily repatriated and, with international assistance and the enormous efforts made by the Government of Viet Nam, had been welcomed back to their original localities where they had been resettled and fully integrated into the community. Between 1991 and 1995, taking into account the appropriateness of the orderly return programmes, Viet Nam had signed agreements with Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand to facilitate the repatriation, in safety and dignity, and with international financial assistance, of persons not choosing to return voluntarily.

49. In mid-February, the Steering Committee of the Comprehensive Plan of Action had decided on the end of 1995 as a target date for termination of the Plan. Viet Nam was actively cooperating with UNHCR and other concerned countries to expedite the process. Recently, representatives of Viet Nam and the United States had met to discuss ways and means of repatriating the remaining 40,000 refugees in camps in South-East Asia.

50. In order to solve the problem and complete the Comprehensive Plan of Action by the deadline, it was essential that Viet Nam, UNHCR and other concerned countries should continue their active cooperation in assisting the returnees to become fully reintegrated into their communities. At the same time, voluntary

repatriation should be further encouraged. However, any feasible solution should be in keeping with the fundamental principles of national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and respect for national legislation, international law and internationally accepted practices. Viet Nam undertook to cooperate fully with UNHCR and all countries concerned to alleviate the plight of those vulnerable people.

51. Mr. Tshering (Bhutan) resumed the Chair.

52. Mr. JESSEN-PETERSEN (Director, UNHCR New York Liaison Office) said that he would inform the High Commissioner of the views expressed during the debate and thanked all the members of the Committee for the positive statements and expressions of support for UNHCR during the discussion of agenda item 109.

53. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its general discussion of agenda item 109.

AGENDA ITEM 105: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/C.3/50/L.11)

Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.11

54. The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.11 entitled "Progress made and problems encountered in the struggle against illiteracy: a mid-decade review - Cooperation to achieve education for all", and pointed out that the draft resolution did not have any programme budget implications.

55. Mr. DE BARROS (Secretary of the Committee) read out a revision to the draft resolution, whereby the words ", taking into account the possible measures, if any, to improve the reporting procedure;" would be added at the end of paragraph 8.

56. Mrs. ENKHTSETSEG (Mongolia) said that, although the draft resolution was almost identical to General Assembly resolution 46/93 of 16 December 1991, the reference to the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was considered inadequate and it had been agreed to make the following changes: in paragraph 6, the words "to pursue, in cooperation with the other sponsors of" should be inserted after "International Literacy Year and", and the words ", the implementation of the World Declaration on Education for All;" should be added at the end of the paragraph. She announced that Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guyana, Jamaica, Malta, Niger and the Philippines had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

57. Mr. KHRYSKOV (Russian Federation) and Mr. DEGHANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that their countries wished to join the sponsors of the draft resolution.

58. Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.11, as orally revised, was adopted without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 106: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)
(A/C.3/50/L.3, L.15 and L.16)

Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.3

59. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.3, entitled "Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders". The Economic and Social Council, by resolution 1995/8, had recommended that the General Assembly should adopt the draft resolution in question, which had no programme budget implications.

60. Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.3 was adopted without a vote.

61. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country had participated actively in the ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and that the resolutions approved at that Congress constituted one more step towards mobilizing international efforts to combat crime and eliminate criminality. During the drafting of the resolution on terrorism and organized crime, Syria had stated that it denounced and rejected terrorism in all its forms and that its laws dealt harshly with any person who committed acts of terrorism. Yet some countries chose not to make any distinction between terrorism, a despicable act, and the legitimate right of peoples to fight against foreign occupation, a right which the international community and the United Nations must continue to support as they had done when the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America had fought against foreign occupation and colonization.

62. The Syrian Arab Republic had requested that its views be reflected in the records of the ninth Congress and, although it was now joining the consensus concerning draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.3, it wished to emphasize the need, when the time came to carry out studies or set up intergovernmental working groups pursuant to resolution 4 of the ninth Congress, to distinguish between terrorism and the right of peoples to combat foreign occupation, especially since the General Assembly declaration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations recognized the right of peoples to take legitimate action to combat foreign occupation.

63. Concerning the creation of a regional training and research centre on the prevention of crime and on criminal justice, Syria had stated time and time again, and repeated once more, that conditions were not right for such an initiative. The Syrian Arab Republic requested that its position on those issues be reflected fully in the records of the session.

Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.15

64. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.15, entitled "Strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, particularly its technical cooperation capacity". The draft resolution would have no programme budget implications.

65. Mr. BUSACCA (Italy) said that a number of changes had been proposed. In the penultimate line of paragraph 9, the words "on a country by country basis"

should be added after the words "criminal justice systems". In the next to last line of paragraph 10, the words ", the Commission on the Status of Women" should be inserted after the words "Human Rights". In the fourth line of paragraph 11, the words "at the country level" should be inserted after the words "criminal justice", and in the fifth line of the same paragraph, the words "emphasizing social development aspects, and" should be inserted after the word "programmes,".

66. When Italy had introduced the draft resolution, Germany, Antigua and Barbuda, Cape Verde, Canada and Greece had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. Afterwards Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Iceland, Latvia, Malta, Philippines, Poland and Spain had added their names to the list of sponsors.

67. Ms. TAMLYN (United States of America) said that her delegation strongly supported the efforts of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.15 to strengthen the effectiveness of United Nations machinery to prevent crime internationally. The United States had joined with many other countries in supporting the transition from the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, consisting of independent experts, to an intergovernmental Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice under the authority of the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly had enthusiastically approved the transition, with the expectation that the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch would receive from the new Commission practical and effective mandates which, in particular, would encourage greater technical cooperation. Her delegation supported the high priority attached to technical cooperation and advisory services in the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme.

68. However her delegation was not able, at that time, to support the upgrading of the Crime Branch to a division. She pointed out that the first resolution adopted by the Commission in 1992 had called for a strategic management plan that required the Secretariat to establish specific goals, priorities and timetables.

69. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, at its fourth session, had adopted a resolution which once again called on the Secretariat to comply with that strategic management plan, and to identify specific action plans for carrying out each of its mandates, including which body or entity would carry out each mandate, how much it would cost, how long it would take and what results would emerge.

70. She said that the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch must first show signs of its commitment to meeting those goals before an upgrading could be justified. The next Commission meeting would be a likely opportunity for the Branch to demonstrate its management and organizational potential. Nevertheless, since her delegation did not wish to stand in the way of consensus adoption of the draft resolution, she would not request a recorded vote.

71. Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.15 was adopted.

72. Mr. FELTON (United Kingdom) said that although crime prevention was a priority area for the United Kingdom and for the United Nations, the importance

of the issue did not translate automatically into an upgrading of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch. His delegation was not opposed in principle to upgrading the Branch, but before any decision was taken more information on the financial and administrative consequences should be available and all relevant facts should be given proper consideration. He therefore believed that the word "welcomes", in paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.15, was premature.

Draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.16

73. Mr. SOAL (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the African Group, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.16, entitled "United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders", and said that the draft resolution was essentially the same as the ones the Committee had adopted on the same subject in previous years.

74. The draft resolution commended the efforts of the Institute to fulfil its mandate despite the precarious financial situation it was facing. It also expressed appreciation to all Governments and intergovernmental organizations which had extended assistance to the Institute and appealed to those providing technical and financial support to continue doing so. The Secretary-General was also requested to provide the Institute with adequate funds from the United Nations programme budget as well as from extrabudgetary sources. In addition, it requested the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to resume support for the Institute, which was vital for the implementation of its mandated activities.

75. The African Group trusted that the draft resolution would once again receive overwhelming support from all delegations as a demonstration by the international community of its continued commitment to the full realization of the objectives set out by the General Assembly in the areas of crime prevention and programmes for Africa.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 14 November 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/C.3/50/L.13/Rev.1 containing the changes to the organization of the Committee's work agreed upon at its 25th meeting. In particular, the Secretary-General's report on the proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/50/747-E/1995/126) would be considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/160, before being submitted to the Committee. Accordingly, while the general discussion of agenda item 107 would conclude on Friday, 17 November, it was proposed that the item should remain open to enable the Committee to take action on the report before the suspension of the session in December.

2. Mrs. ÁLVAREZ (Dominican Republic) pointed out that the document in question was a note by the Secretariat. There had been a failure to comply with resolution 49/160, which clearly requested a report from the Secretary-General on the proposed merger.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would take note of that observation and pursue the matter further.

4. He took it that the Committee agreed to the changes in the organization of work.

5. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/50/3, 38, 110, 163, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/257/Rev.1-E/1995/61/Rev.1, A/50/346, 369, 373, 398, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/538, 691 and A/50/747-E/1995/126)

AGENDA ITEM 165: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/50/744; A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1)

6. Mrs. MONGELLA (Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women), introducing the two items, said that the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in October 1995, had reaffirmed the connection between the advancement of women and progress in society as a whole; women's issues were not only women's concerns, but societal issues too. A broad range of actors, contributing a diversity of experiences and knowledge, had participated in the Conference, thereby ensuring its inclusiveness. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1) was a global document representing women's hopes, expectations and aspirations for the twenty-first century. It defined strategies to empower women in the social, political and economic spheres and eliminate discrimination against them. Action and accountability had been the key words in Beijing.

7. Accordingly, the commitments made in the Platform must now be translated into action. The momentum created at the Conference must be sustained. Any delay in implementing the Platform would mean an increase in the number of women dying in childbirth, a rise in women's illiteracy and the perpetuation of violence and discrimination against women. Lack of resources should not be a pretext for failing to address women's issues and, given that decision-making remained heavily dominated by men, who sometimes found it difficult to appreciate women's concerns, women themselves must become crusaders. It was her strong conviction that, since the 189 Governments present in Beijing had adopted the Platform by consensus, they would rally both the resources and the political will necessary for its implementation.

8. In the follow-up to the Conference, Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society were called upon to work at different levels and in different capacities. The United Nations was, for its part, a crucial player in the implementation process. Since its inception, the Organization had facilitated the globalization of the women's agenda, breaking the silence on many women's issues previously considered taboo in public discussions. Without the Organization, it would not have been possible to adopt such instruments as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the next 50 years, it must work to honour the decisions made at the Conference. The bodies dealing with women's issues, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, must be strengthened to enable them to monitor more effectively the inclusion of a gender perspective in all the Organization's activities. Through its specialized agencies, the United Nations must widen its outreach to women at the grass-roots level, building on the spirit of cooperation which had characterized the preparatory process.

9. It must not be assumed that structures and attitudes would change automatically as a result of the Conference. Those changes must be part and parcel of the implementation of the Platform. The women working in the United Nations were no different from the other women of the world. They sometimes experienced sexual harassment, discrimination and unequal treatment. Currently, women were primarily workers, while men were the decision-makers. Bold steps were needed to create a new and better United Nations, an Organization which would serve as a model to Governments and the world, where men and women would work together as equal partners.

10. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744), said that, in the introduction, the Secretary-General had emphasized the inclusive and wide-ranging nature of the preparatory phase which had resulted in the adoption at the Conference of a Declaration and Platform for Action, encompassing a remarkable array of issues and enjoying strong and varied support. Beijing had been a Conference of commitments and the broad support for the Platform would enable those commitments to find their expression in concrete policies and measures. Immediate action was needed if real progress was to be made by the end of the century, particularly in the 12 critical areas (ibid., para. 16).

11. While Governments bore the primary responsibility for fulfilling the commitments made at Beijing, the Platform contained recommendations addressed to

the organizations of the United Nations system, which had a key role to play in providing operational support for country-level follow-up. In his report, the Secretary-General called for a new unity of purpose and action in the system as a whole. Important steps had already been taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to ensure a well-coordinated follow-up to the Beijing Conference and the other recent international conferences. The Secretary-General intended to propose to ACC the establishment of an inter-agency task force on the empowerment and advancement of women. At the intergovernmental level, the various policy-making bodies must harmonize their work in order to develop an enhanced framework for international cooperation on gender issues.

12. In response to the recommendations addressed specifically to him, the Secretary-General had outlined in his report (ibid., para. 56) arrangements for the proposed appointment in his Office of an adviser on gender issues. He would ensure that the gender dimension was fully reflected in the next medium-term plan and would continue his efforts to enhance the status of women in the Organization in accordance with the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000). The proposed establishment of a high-level board on the advancement of women would contribute significantly to strengthening the partnerships between the United Nations and civil society. Finally, the Secretary-General underlined in his report the importance of continued participation by non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Platform.

13. Mrs. EDWARDS (Marshall Islands) said that while the new millennium held the promise of significant progress for women, new and additional resources must be committed by the international community if the objectives of the Platform for Action were to be achieved. The Government of the Marshall Islands, for its part, was pursuing a national women's policy born out of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies adopted 10 years earlier. Since then, workshops had been held with the participation of local women and a number of critical areas of concern, including education, health and support of women's business initiatives, had been incorporated into the policy. Central objectives were to strengthen the Women's Affairs Division in the Ministry of Social Services; establish a contact point in each ministry to deal with the implementation of the national women's policy; conduct gender-sensitivity training at all levels of government; produce gender-specific data through the Office of Planning and Statistics; include young women in policy-making; and continue population education to combat the high population growth rate.

14. Economic growth - a prerequisite for sustained improvements in human development - must be accompanied by equitable distribution. Gender issues must be incorporated in economic development programmes with a view to increasing women's participation. Educational inequalities must be overcome in order to empower women to gain access to productive assets and control the gains from their labour in the interests of family, community and national development.

15. The major obstacles to women's progress in her country were high fertility rates and high child and infant mortality rates. In addition, the Marshall Islands was still struggling to overcome the effects of the nuclear-weapons testing programme conducted there, which the United Nations itself had condoned. The radiation that the population had been exposed to and the lingering

radiation in the environment and food crops had caused numerous health and environmental problems, which her country was unable to solve.

16. Since radiation caused extensive damage to the reproductive system, women throughout the nation were plagued with birthing problems and associated illnesses. Her Government was trying to mobilize its forces to deal with a new and startling fact: the leading cause of death for women in the Marshall Islands was cancer of the reproductive system. Although the level of health care available to pregnant women was inadequate, there was without doubt a link between that new cancer statistic and the radiation to which they had been exposed. Women in the Marshall Islands were experiencing a harrowing incidence of birth abnormalities, stillbirths and miscarriages. That was an example of the destructive cycle caused by nuclear radiation, which also impeded development. Nevertheless, her country could improve women's health and overall status through education and programmes in which women were able to contribute to sustainable human development.

17. Mrs. ÁLVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that the Committee must take a decision on the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM before it completed its consideration of agenda item 107. Her delegation had already distributed to the members of the Committee the text of its views together with copies of the statement made by the Dominican Republic in the Economic and Social Council in November 1994. All that background information was pertinent to the decision to be taken by the Committee on the matter.

18. Her Government was convinced that the administrative and financial operations of the United Nations needed a general review and restructuring. Nevertheless, the proposed institutional reform of all United Nations bodies dealing with the advancement of women should be an integral part of the general reform of the United Nations system since each had a mandate to deal with the issues of economic, social and cultural development and peace-building. The participants in a forum on the future of the United Nations held by ACC in March 1995 had discussed the reform of the United Nations and made recommendations. They had pointed out that fundamental issues had to be tackled, involving major reforms, and that an undertaking of that scope must be carried out in a democratic and transparent manner, with the involvement of all nations. They had emphasized the risk that wholly inappropriate, if not dangerous, approaches to reform would be adopted and given institutional expression.

19. The Organization's problems were primarily political and substantive and could not be resolved by reforms largely confined to a management approach and the mechanical transplantation of model techniques and institutional approaches corresponding to transnational enterprises or national Governments. The forum had stressed that the United Nations was unique and that, while improved management and cost-effectiveness were certainly needed, the reform must also deal with broader issues related to the roles and purposes of the Organization, whose overall performance could not be assessed on the basis of cost-benefit analysis. It had also emphasized that the fundamental principles set forth in the Charter must serve as a basic reference point for the reforms needed to be asserted as a bulwark against the frequent temptation on the part of a few major Powers to "steward" the world politically and economically.

20. Her delegation was deeply troubled by the way in which the Secretariat had chosen to deal with the proposed merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The lack of transparency and complete disregard of mandates given by Member States in various resolutions were cause for grave concern to a number of developing countries. The Secretariat was an international body and as such must serve the Organization. It must therefore be under the collective guidance and control of Governments and be protected against unilateral pressures by Governments to dominate and even manage the secretariats of international organizations.

21. She drew attention to an article entitled "The United Nations Has Been a Success", which had appeared in the 23 October 1995 issue of the magazine Time and was based on an interview with the Secretary-General. Without analysing the reasons underlying the desire expressed by the Secretary-General to move INSTRAW to New York or inquiring as to the source of the misleading information given to him about the Institute, her delegation wished to point out that decisions affecting the functional structure of United Nations bodies must not be taken without accurate information. Unfortunately, that was the way in which all items relating to the advancement of women continued to be dealt with in the United Nations. That was unacceptable under the Charter, according to which the Secretary-General was accountable to the Member States for the proper administration of the Organization and the implementation of its programmes. His managerial discretion was limited by the mandates given to him by Member States and the resources which they made available to fulfil those mandates. Unfortunately, the article proved unequivocally that, for a variety of reasons, the question of the advancement of women was not being correctly addressed. Women could not permit that.

22. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that it was truly disappointing that the Secretariat had never come close to reflecting in its composition a fundamental principle laid down in the Charter - the equal rights of women and men. Regrettably, the target set in 1990 for improving the representation of women in the Secretariat by 1995 would not be met. While the 35 per cent overall target had almost been achieved, the Organization was nowhere near the target of 25 per cent of senior posts to be filled by women. Women continued to be heavily clustered in subordinate positions, almost disappearing as grade levels rose.

23. Equitable representation of women in the Secretariat must be approached in an overall context of human resources planning and management. In view of the failure to meet the 1990 targets, both the Secretariat and Member States must redouble their efforts to ensure that other important targets for the advancement of women were achieved. The full and urgent implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) was essential to achieve the overall gender-equality target set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly at the Professional level and above.

24. She welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to integrate the strategic plan into the new management culture being developed for the Organization. The gender imbalance in the Secretariat must be addressed as part of a wider strategy for human resources management. Ensuring conditions for equality would require concerted and urgent efforts, including the development of policies to

eliminate all barriers faced by women, laying down appropriate policies for career development of women, and the creation of equitable work practices and an equitable work environment.

25. The best results would be achieved when the responsibility for the advancement of women in the Secretariat was placed directly on identifiable organizational units and officials. Her delegation welcomed the inclusion in training programmes of components designed to sensitize managers with regard to gender issues and the need to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of work. She noted the initiative for developing and implementing systems of planned rotation by occupational group and encouraged the Secretariat's continued investigation of flexible working arrangements which took account of family responsibilities. Australia, Canada and New Zealand welcomed the work of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and the discussions that had recently taken place in ACC, especially the statement it had adopted affirming the commitment of Executive Heads to ensure that the advancement of women was a policy priority within the organizations of the common system. The issue of women in the Secretariat should remain an item for the consideration of ACC.

26. Her delegation also welcomed the various initiatives undertaken by the Secretariat in the past year, but stressed that the task remained an enormous one and that initiatives should be undertaken urgently. While commending the measures taken to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace, she urged that any review of policies and procedures in that area should also include an examination of grievance redress systems.

27. The introduction of an equal-employment-opportunity policy would complement the Secretariat's current efforts to establish a clear policy direction on personnel practices. Lastly, she stressed that Member States also had a responsibility to help the United Nations succeed in that task and should nominate suitably qualified women for positions in the Organization, particularly at the professional and senior levels.

28. Ms. MESDOUA (Algeria) said that, as the Organization was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, approximately 70 per cent of those living in absolute poverty in the world were women. Many of them continued to struggle against hunger and malnutrition. Illiteracy rates among women were still higher than those of men; and many women had no access to the most basic health care. Women's struggle for equality was inseparably linked to that of men and no balanced society could be built without the full participation of women.

29. Algerian women had been involved in all the important stages of the country's history. The measures taken by her Government were designed to establish the place of Algerian women in society and improve their status. Such measures included providing universal free and compulsory education, maintaining a health care system to protect women and children, and ensuring access to employment with equal pay and without discrimination and were linked to the modernization taking place throughout Algerian society. Algerian women were aware of what was at stake in the struggle being waged in their country: the construction of a democratic and pluralistic State promoting the status of women and their real involvement in development. Accordingly, Algeria had done its

utmost to ensure the success of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was a landmark in efforts to ensure a better future for all women and society in general.

30. Mrs. SUBIRATS (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the delegations of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action constituted both a milestone on the road to equality and a political commitment to achieving the goals of equality, development and peace by the year 2000. Equality in decision-making was essential for strengthening democracy and a commitment had been made to making the gender perspective a benchmark for all policies.

31. The implementation of the Platform for Action was first and foremost the responsibility of Governments, which must take steps to bring about equality between the sexes and introduce the gender perspective into all social, economic, political and cultural fields. Their first action should be to develop comprehensive strategies in an appropriate time-frame and encourage non-governmental organizations to contribute to them. Governments should also ensure that national machinery was created or made more efficient in order to include a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas, while non-governmental organizations had an important role to play by organizing support networks.

32. Within the European Union, it had been decided that the implementation of the Platform for Action would be monitored annually by the Council of Ministers. The European Commission had prepared a new plan of action on equality of opportunities for men and women; the European Parliament had adopted specific resolutions as a result of the Beijing Conference, and a seminar was being organized in Madrid in late November in the context of regular discussions on equality issues in the European Union.

33. The implementation of the Platform for Action required a political commitment to guaranteeing the resources for the empowerment of women, nationally and internationally, and required the inclusion of the gender perspective in policy and programme budgets. The mobilization of resources from new private sources might also be necessary, together with support from development institutions and bilateral donors.

34. The follow-up to the Beijing Conference should be coordinated with the results of the major international conferences on economic, social and other matters. The challenge was how to ensure that the Platform for Action would be taken into account in current United Nations activities such as the agenda for development. There was a need to review the strategies and working methods of the United Nations machinery for the advancement of women; the planned creation of the post of an adviser to the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of gender policies throughout the system should contribute to that end.

35. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, together with the Commission on the Status of Women, would constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism which would play the main role in the implementation of the Platform for Action within the United Nations system. The Commission on the Status of Women should draw up a programme of work for the period 1996-2000

in order to review priority areas of concern contained in the Platform and assist the Economic and Social Council in identifying cases in which efforts to achieve integration had been unsuccessful. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women could also contribute to the follow-up process through the reports of States parties.

36. One of the main functions of the Division for the Advancement of Women was to provide substantive service to the Commission on the Status of Women. As a consequence of the Beijing Conference, the resources allocated to the Division needed to be reviewed within the regular budget of the United Nations in order to enable it to carry out the tasks set out in the Platform for Action.

37. The European Union attached great importance to the role of the specialized agencies and other organizations within the United Nations system in supporting action and strategies for the implementation of the Platform for Action. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had, since their inception, developed important research and training activities in connection with the situation of women, and could play an important role in supporting the implementation of the Platform for Action. The international financial institutions also had a role to play and should review their policies, procedures and staffing to ensure that the gender perspective was fully integrated, so that investments and programmes would benefit women and contribute to sustainable development.

38. Referring to agenda item 107, she said that the European Union was convinced of the need for States to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and therefore called for the full implementation of those provisions of the Platform for Action which concerned the Convention. It also supported the process initiated by the Commission on the Status of Women for the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the right of petition.

39. The issue of violence against women should continue to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was an important instrument and the European Union welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women and supported her work.

40. Mr. WISSA (Egypt) said that the Egyptian Government had begun to formulate the policies necessary for the implementation of the Beijing recommendations. Egyptian women had made important advances during the twentieth century and currently participated significantly in all aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life. There was general consensus in Egyptian society on the effectiveness of women's roles and the importance of their full participation in all spheres. Egypt had played an important part in the development of civilization, and would be able to adapt to modern society. A dynamic society could not be built without the contribution of women and Egyptian society was clearly supportive of the Egyptian women's movement and of women's effective social and economic participation.

41. Egypt would face a number of challenges in the twenty-first century, the first of them being that of education. There was a gap between the educational levels reached in Egypt and those of developed countries which, if allowed to continue, would have a serious effect on Egypt's ability to maintain cultural progress. It was proposed to tackle that problem on two levels: the qualitative, which would involve a change of curricula, bring Egyptian students' educational level into line with that of developed countries, and quantitative, involving the eradication of illiteracy, particularly among women. The women's movement attached great importance to the raising of women's educational standards and the eradication of illiteracy.

42. The second challenge was that presented by Egyptian culture, and women's strategy should be to strengthen and support the enlightened approach. The third challenge was economic: there was an enormous gap between Egypt and the economically developed countries. Women had an important role to play in meeting that challenge. Women's participation in development at all levels should be expanded and each woman should also become economically independent.

43. Strong democratic institutions and policies would affirm women's role in laying the foundations for democracy in the home through the early education of children. Women's full participation in society at every level would help to eliminate prejudice. Egypt proposed to prepare detailed studies on plans to meet the challenges faced by Egypt and Egyptian women.

44. The future looked promising for the women's movement in Egypt, since society in general was supportive, realizing the importance of women's contribution to development. International cooperation would be an important factor in the advancement of women and in achieving the principles agreed upon at the Vienna, Cairo and Copenhagen conferences.

45. Ms. NAFISAH (Malaysia), speaking on agenda item 107, said that the "feminization of poverty" referred to in the Platform for Action was a reality requiring immediate attention, since women comprised 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people below the absolute poverty line. The poverty of women was the poverty of society at large and education was of major importance in addressing that issue; educating women was a necessary investment for the continued promotion of economic and social development, while educational opportunities for both men and women ensured that the potential of the individual could be developed. Educated and literate women tended to have better access to employment, income, health care and nutrition. In Malaysia, more women than men went on to post-secondary education, but efforts to extend vocational training opportunities for women needed to be made world wide.

46. Health was also an important indicator of women's position and status; laws were needed to protect working women whose work could endanger their health. In Malaysia, life expectancy for women had increased while maternal and infant mortality had also improved significantly.

47. Women were the most vulnerable in ethnic, religious and civil conflicts, when they faced the danger not only of being killed or injured but also of being raped, abused or forced into prostitution. Where, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

rape had been used as a weapon of war, the international community must ensure that the perpetrators of such acts were brought to justice.

48. In Malaysia, there was a special focus on the integration of women into development through the national policy for women adopted in 1989. A plan of action was aimed at involving women in decision-making, safeguarding their rights to health, education and social well-being, removing legal obstacles and ensuring tneir access to development, particularly in science and technology. Efforts continued with a view to increasing the participation of women in economic affairs so that they could share in the benefits of development. The Constitution of Malaysia had long guaranteed their political rights.

49. The economic, social and political empowerment of women would be less than effective without the cooperation of the mass media, which could highlight the plight of women and also their contribution to society.

50. Her Government did not favour the creation of new institutional machinery for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, but suggested that UNIFEM could concentrate on operational aspects while the Division for the Advancement of Women could focus on policy issues. It hoped that a consensus could be reached in that regard.

51. Mrs. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Beijing Conference had represented women's first opportunity to discuss in an international conference such matters as women's unpaid work, equal inheritance rights, reproductive rights recognized as human rights and violence against women being considered as a human rights violation. However, the Conference would not be a true success unless action was taken on all levels to implement its recommendations. In Côte d'Ivoire the preparatory committee for the Conference had been given the new mandate of overseeing implementation, and a national plan of action was currently being worked out. Women's organizations were being strengthened and were preparing for action.

52. However, apathy seemed to be affecting international organizations, and there already appeared to be some withdrawal from agreements. Budget restrictions had first affected departments concerned with the advancement of women. Immediately after the Beijing Conference, eight posts had been lost in one of the main bodies responsible for financing the integration of women in development, and another had decided to reduce by 25 per cent its budget for the advancement of women. Furthermore, the only two women with the rank of Under-Secretary-General in the United Nations Secretariat were about to complete their contracts and were not assured of other posts at the same level. An examination of the position of women in the Secretariat showed that men still occupied all the major posts, and that the promotion of women to high-level positions was still a pious wish. There could hardly be no suitably qualified women candidates for those posts.

53. While Governments had primary responsibility for implementing the Beijing recommendations, developing countries, particularly in Africa, could not honour their undertakings without the support of the international community. Stagnant economies and the dwindling of external resources hampered most African countries' development activities, including the advancement of women.

54. An analysis of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Programme for Action (A/CONF.177/20, annex II, para. 44) showed that the agencies had a major role to play, and needed substantial contributions in order to carry out their assignments. There had been an observable decline in the budgets of development programmes; official development aid had reached its lowest level since 1993. The structures in the Secretariat and the regional commissions responsible for implementing the Platform for Action needed additional resources, but as yet there had been no changes.

55. The commitment undertaken by the World Bank at Beijing to support programmes for the education and economic promotion of women in poor countries had been encouraging. Other regional and international financial institutions should follow that example and facilitate women's access to credit and economic structures, in order to reverse the trend of the feminization of poverty. At Beijing, solemn undertakings had been given to promote women in the economic, social and political spheres, but without genuine political will and the necessary funds, it was likely that the living conditions of millions of women in the world would stagnate or even regress.

56. Mr. ALBIN (Mexico), speaking on agenda item 107, said that although obstacles still existed to the advancement of women, improved conceptual and methodological tools for analysis, discussion and action had been evolved since the Mexico Conference of 1975. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided a framework for action at all levels and incorporated commitments by Governments and indications of how various sectors of society could supplement their efforts.

57. It was time to leave restrictive approaches behind and elaborate comprehensive polices which would give women access to opportunities and resources. The Platform for Action reflected the willingness of Governments to give a new direction to economic and social development policies and to reallocate resources. The support of the United Nations system and international cooperation were vital for implementing the commitments made in Beijing, although careful consideration needed to be given to the adjustments to be made to ensure that existing machinery could handle that task efficiently. The Commission on the Status of Women needed to be strengthened while the Economic and Social Council had a coordinating role to play. Of particular importance was the dissemination of information on the Beijing Conference so as to allow all concerned members of society to be involved in achieving its goals.

58. Mexico had always recognized the valuable contribution of women to production, to the preservation of the Mexican culture and to the progress of democracy. The commitment of the Mexican Government was reflected in its national development plan, which contained measures to guarantee women equality of opportunities, education, training and employment, to be implemented in a national women's programme which would serve as a framework for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

59. Mrs. FENG Cui (China) said that the enhancement of international cooperation was essential to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The international community should fulfil the commitments undertaken at the Conference and mobilize new and additional resources to

advance women. The Chinese Government had always advocated the equality of men and women, attached great importance to the advancement of women and committed itself to protecting women's rights and interests and eliminating discrimination. Recent advances had included a series of legal instruments relating to the protection of women's rights and interests. They included a law on the protection of women's rights; the appointment of women to a number of important positions; a rise in the number of women employed to 44 per cent of the total employed; equal pay for equal work; the emergence of thousands of women from poverty; and the high rate of literacy achieved amongst girls and women.

60. The Government had recently drafted its programme for the advancement of Chinese women to the year 2000, representing an important step in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The State Council committee on the work of women and children had called upon all local governments to formulate plans for the advancement of women and integrate those plans into their respective development programmes.

61. The Chinese Government had identified a number of priorities for improving the status of women. Women's potential must be developed and their access to employment increased; men and women should enjoy equal pay for equal work, equal labour protection and social security, and women should participate fully in economic construction. Women in undeveloped areas and the least advantaged groups needed special assistance and preferential treatment. Women's access to education must be improved, and girls' enrolment in school must be increased. Health institutions catering for women and children and their provision of reproductive health services must be improved. Laws and regulations on the protection of women's rights and interests must be constantly improved, and those who violated women's rights should be brought to justice. The number of women participating in political affairs and holding important public office should be increased. Lastly, bodies concerned with the advancement of women should be strengthened and monitoring mechanisms should be established.

62. The Chinese Government was taking action to fulfil its commitments, and was ready to work with the international community in order to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

63. Ms. SHAM POO (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Beijing Conference had been a conference of commitments. Some 65 Governments had announced that they had taken or would take specific action to enhance the status of women in their countries. United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, and international financial institutions had also made concrete commitments.

64. The logical place to start implementing the Beijing Platform for Action was early in the lives of girls. Referring to the first of three key areas for priority action, she said UNICEF believed that Governments should be assisted in reaching the goal of primary education for all girls by the year 2000. UNICEF itself would seek to double its budget for education within the same period.

65. With regard to the health of adolescent girls and women, its second key area, UNICEF would cooperate in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in that sector of the population and in renewed efforts to lower maternal mortality.

66. Children's and women's rights were the third key area for action by UNICEF. It would continue its cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and increase its support to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In the field it would support efforts to link advocacy for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with national programmes of action for children and the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

67. UNICEF was working towards greater gender-responsiveness; it was beginning to use the life-cycle approach and the gender-equality and empowerment framework in planning its programmes; it was training its staff and counterparts in gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming; it was reviewing its organizational structure and allocation of resources to support the implementation of the Platform for Action; it was striving to create a work environment free from gender discrimination and developing a monitoring system to measure progress for women from the community level upwards. It had come to understand that achieving gender equality was central to improving the lives of children and their families, to building sustainable development and to creating a civilized world in the twenty-first century.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

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THIRD COMMITTEE
27th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 15 November 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RATA (New Zealand)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of Mr. Tshering (Bhutan), Mr. Rata (New Zealand), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/38, A/50/110, A/50/163, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/257/Rev.1-E/1995/61/Rev.1, A/50/346, A/50/369, A/50/378, A/50/398, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/538, A/50/611, A/50/744, A/50/747-E/1995/126; A/CONF.127/20 and Add.1*)

AGENDA ITEM 165: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/50/744)

1. Mr. RI SONG IL (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 had made significant progress in the struggle for equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action adopted at the Conference was a powerful agenda for the empowerment of women through the integration of gender perspectives in all policies and the adoption of concrete measures to benefit women, which must be implemented by the international community and by Member States. It accorded priority to the rapid elimination of poverty, unemployment, disease and illiteracy, which were among the most urgent problems for women in developing countries which had once been colonies. Inequitable economic and trade relations had a negative impact on the development of those countries and, hence, on the situation of women living there; his delegation therefore believed that the advancement of women involved the implementation of strategies aimed at establishing equitable international political and economic relations and that the developed countries had a special responsibility in that respect. Each country had a decisive role to play in enhancing the status of women and must fulfil that responsibility by adopting laws which guaranteed the equal rights of women and men in all fields, at both the constitutional and practical levels. Since the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had always regarded gender equality as a basic element of national social development policy, women were participating actively in the management of State affairs, in the economy and in development. The Constitution guaranteed the equal rights of women in political and social life and contained specific provisions to benefit them. His Government had taken all the necessary measures - free medical care, paid maternity leave, free and compulsory education - to enable women to participate freely in the life of society, in accordance with the spirit of the people-centred socialist system in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

2. His delegation wished to reiterate its deep concern about the problem of the more than 200,000 "comfort women", largely Korean, who had been captured and systematically raped, tortured and often killed by the Japanese army during the Second World War. Despite some recent conciliatory steps, the Japanese Government had never fully admitted its guilt or properly compensated the victims of its past crimes and their families. The Democratic People's Republic

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* To be issued.

of Korea once again urged the Japanese Government to assume fully its political responsibilities by disclosing the whole truth about what had happened, apologizing to the victims of the crimes and providing full compensation at the State level.

3. Mr. LEE (Republic of Korea) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had confirmed the critical notion that the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life and recognition of women's rights as basic rights were two goals that were inseparable from the achievement of sustainable development. Through the participation of a wide range of actors, from world leaders to representatives of non-governmental organizations, the Conference had also been able to draw unprecedented attention to the issues facing women, particularly at the grass-roots level. The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which proposed new directions for ensuring the full participation of women and gender equality, would depend, in the first place, on the commitment of the leaders of each country to making the necessary institutional and financial arrangements. Each Government, given the countless tasks facing it, should identify its own strategic goals and national priorities, within the framework of the 12 critical areas of concern set out in the Platform for Action.

4. His Government, believing that the achievement of gender equality through the lasting empowerment of women at all levels was one of the policy priorities in the implementation of the Platform for Action, was currently drawing up a national plan to strengthen the participation of women in society. The plan included the enactment of a basic law on gender equality which would facilitate the integration of a gender perspective into national policies, an increase in the ratio of women in senior governmental positions by the year 2000, the adoption of concrete measures to assist working mothers, the hosting of national, regional and international meetings at the centre for women recently established to monitor the follow-up to the recommendations of the Conference and the publication and distribution of the entire text of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in order to further educate the public, regardless of gender, about the indispensable role of women in society.

5. At the international level, the implementation of the outcome of the Conference would depend primarily on global cooperation and partnership, especially in the area of the eradication of poverty among women, which remained one of the most serious obstacles to the advancement of women. The Republic of Korea stressed in that respect the vital importance of enhancing cooperation between developed countries and international financial organizations to eliminate the threat of poverty for women in developing countries, especially the least developed countries. Global social development efforts must place special focus on women because they were the primary victims of discrimination and social injustice and because sustainable development could be achieved only through equal rights and opportunities for women in the areas of education, health and family planning. In order to ensure that existing social institutions which perpetuated discrimination against women put an end to their practices, the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women must be adequately taken into account when formulating global social development programmes.

6. Since women victims of conflict and refugees needed special protection, his delegation stressed the importance of the section of the Platform for Action concerned with the advancement of peace, conflict resolution and reduction of the impact of armed and other conflicts on women and would continue to support all measures to protect the basic rights of women. Although it was primarily the responsibility of each country to ensure the proper institutional arrangements for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations had an invaluable coordinating role. In that regard, the mechanisms for the advancement of women within the United Nations system must be strengthened and United Nations bodies must accord greater emphasis to women's affairs. The proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should be considered in that context.

7. Non-governmental organizations had made consistent and concerted efforts during the preparatory process and the proceedings of the Beijing Conference, and they deserved greater attention as partners and as important actors in implementing its recommendations. They could play a pivotal role in attracting the attention of national policy makers and in giving women at all levels of society an opportunity to know their rights guaranteed in the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action.

8. At the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, women had at last taken their due place in the agenda of the Organization. The Republic of Korea recognized the efforts and achievements of the United Nations over the past half-century in the advancement of women, although much remained to be done. His Government hoped to see the Organization redouble its efforts in that area, and expressed its commitment to fully support and cooperate with those efforts.

9. Ms. BUCK (Canada) welcomed the fact that, 50 years after the establishment of the United Nations, the promotion of women's equality and rights had become an essential element in the Organization's efforts to secure equality, development and peace in the world. The Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women clearly showed the determination of States to promote women's rights. Her Government had accorded the highest priority to the development of that master plan, which emphasized the duty of States to adopt actions and policies to empower women. However, while Governments had primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action, the role of the United Nations system was critically important in providing support and a forum for deliberation. Her Government therefore considered that the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, the focal point for United Nations efforts to eliminate gender-based discrimination, should be reviewed and strengthened. The Commission should have a central role in monitoring implementation of the Platform for Action and in assisting the Economic and Social Council in coordination of reporting on implementation, in conjunction with an inter-agency mechanism. It should also play a part in the integration of gender perspective throughout the activities of the United Nations system. A review of the mandate of the Commission would also require a reassessment of the functions of the Division for the Advancement of Women, including its role in the implementation of the Platform and particularly of the system-wide medium-term plan for the

advancement of women from 1996 to 2001, in the light of the recommendations of the Beijing Conference. Canada would continue to work with other States and with the Division to identify ways in which that could be accomplished.

10. It was critically important to ensure system-wide coordination of activities for the advancement of women arising out of other United Nations conferences such as the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, and the World Summit for Social Development.

11. Her delegation was pleased to note the recommendations of the Secretary-General with regard to ensuring that gender issues were integrated into overall policy-making and programming and taken into account in all aspects of the work of the system. It also welcomed his proposal to establish a high-level board on the advancement of women to advise him on the follow-up to the Conference, and applauded his recent decision to create inter-agency task forces to support country-level follow-up to United Nations conference agreements. The work of each of those task forces would benefit greatly from taking account of the gender dimension. It also supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a fourth inter-agency task force on the empowerment and advancement of women to work on the follow-up to the Conference. In a recent statement to the General Assembly, her delegation had emphasized the need to improve cooperation with and among the specialized agencies in order to make the best possible use of the limited resources available to the United Nations. The executive heads of those bodies should coordinate the follow-up to international conferences in order to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

12. Since the World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Canada had made great progress in its efforts to achieve equality for women. In order to go even farther, just before the Beijing Conference, her Government had published a Federal Plan for Gender Equality. Among its commitments, it was proposed that gender analysis should be applied to the development of national policies, programmes and legislation, in order to assess their potential gender impact. She hoped that the plan would result in improvements in the daily lives of women and men.

13. Efficient implementation of the Platform for Action would depend on the support it received from non-governmental organizations, whose participation had been a key element in the success of the Conference. Public interest and the active involvement of all sectors of society would add impetus to the international efforts of the United Nations and the national efforts of Member States. Accordingly, the Commission on the Status of Women might wish to review how the broad range of independent actors involved in the Conference might be included in its work. States might wish to consider enabling representatives of civil society to take part in the preparation of their national implementation strategies.

14. Mrs. MONTOUSSAMY-ASHE (United States of America) said that the Beijing Conference, far from simply reaffirming the achievements of previous United Nations conferences, had produced a Platform for Action which was genuinely designed to empower women, emphasizing their role as agents of change rather than as passive beneficiaries. It also showed what obstacles remained, and what

must be done to overcome them. It was the first time that a document directed at the advancement of women had been framed in the context of human rights and economic independence, stressing the rights and freedoms of the individual. Another characteristic of the Platform was its focus on practical steps to ensure integration of women into all political, social and economic spheres, in a decision-making role. Throughout the preparations for the Conference, those involved had been constantly reminded that one of its main purposes was to mobilize women and men at all levels to work together for the advancement of women. Individuals and non-governmental organizations must continue to work together and with Governments to build the necessary political will to effect change. At Beijing, many Governments had announced measures which they had implemented, or undertook to implement, to advance the status of women in their countries.

15. At the same time, it was necessary to strengthen the capacities of the United Nations in that area. Effective implementation of the Platform would require changes in the internal dynamics of institutions and organizations, particularly in respect of values, behaviour, rules and procedures that obstructed the advancement of women. The United Nations should integrate gender perspective into all its activities, thereby demonstrating its commitment and giving an example to the international community as a whole. The Organization must also coordinate its work and monitor the implementation of the Platform. Her delegation welcomed the intention of the Commission on the Status of Women to review its work programme, which would enable it to carry out more dynamically its catalytic role in the implementation of the Platform for Action. It also looked forward to the establishment, within existing human and financial resources, of a high-level post in the Office of the Secretary-General, to act as his adviser on gender issues and to help ensure system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action, working in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women. The majority of the Platform's objectives could be accomplished through political, economic, and institutional changes which would establish priorities and target appropriate financial resources in support of women and girls. If the process was to move forward, political will at all levels would be absolutely vital.

16. Mr. MISTRÍK (Slovakia) said that the profound changes that had swept Slovakia in recent years had greatly influenced the behaviour and attitudes of its citizens, particularly women. The climate generated by a democratic, emancipated society had enabled women to take sovereign responsibility for solving their economic and social problems, to secure pluralism of opinions and obtain more information in the sphere of human rights, especially women's rights.

17. That transformation process, however, had also had a negative impact on women's employment and on crime against women. Moreover, although 13 per cent of the deputies in Parliament were women and three women held ministerial posts, a conspicuous gap remained between the number of well-educated women and the number who managed to occupy responsible and managerial positions.

18. Traditional family values remained deeply entrenched in Slovakia. The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women recalled that women's equality began in the family. In that respect, it was necessary to

break traditional male dominance and educate women to have faith in their own skills and decision-making abilities.

19. His Government supported the strengthening of international cooperation in the implementation of programmes for the advancement of women. It was fully aware of the necessity of respecting women's needs and had paid enormous attention to national and international activities connected with the preparatory process for the Fourth World Conference on Women. As a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, Slovakia had participated actively in the preparation of the final document of the Conference and its Platform for Action.

20. With regard to the implementation and follow-up of the outcome of the Beijing Conference, his Government would focus on the status of women and on creating the requisite conditions for the implementation of the conclusions reached at the Conference in the area of economic development, primarily in the sphere of small and medium-sized enterprises. It would also support an increase in the number of women in the United Nations Secretariat and in the specialized agencies, particularly at senior levels.

21. His delegation believed that the Beijing Conference had taken a major step forward in defending women's rights by recalling that those rights were indivisible from other human rights.

22. Ms. HOWARTH WILES (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that, over the past five years, UNHCR had made significant progress in ensuring that the situation of refugee women was specifically addressed in all aspects of its protection and assistance activities. Its policy and guidelines on refugee women had served to make staff and implementing partners aware of the hardships and vulnerabilities particular to that population group. Major training programmes, including training in emergency management, protection and programming, now included a gender training module, which had been made more accessible through the involvement of local non-governmental organizations as trainers. That concern to address women's needs had resulted in several far-reaching changes in UNHCR programme delivery. Any new emergency response now included action by community service officers to assess particular vulnerabilities at the earliest stage. UNHCR offered both physical and legal protection to refugees and had developed new guidelines aimed at preventing violence against women. Several countries had already put in place measures to ensure that asylum procedures were responsive to the specific needs of female applicants. It was also expected that informing refugees of their legal rights and responsibilities would enhance security in refugee camps. UNHCR was working with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to address the lack of reproductive health services in its activities. Greater attention was also being paid to the development of gender-disaggregated statistics, and registration procedures and needs assessment tools now ensured that the gender differential was addressed.

23. Despite the increasing focus on the plight of women refugees, UNHCR remained concerned that its policy and guidelines on refugee women were not being implemented sufficiently at the field level. One particular concern was the lack of participation by refugee women in the planning of activities and in the refugee committees established to administer camps. It was important, for

instance, to ensure that women received their fair share of food and other distributed items.

24. UNHCR had been actively involved in the regional preparatory meetings for the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as in the Conference itself. In close cooperation with Governments, non-governmental organizations and refugee women, it had succeeded in ensuring that the particular needs of refugee women, specifically with regard to human rights, violence and the impact of armed conflict, were well addressed throughout the Platform for Action. Efforts must now be made to implement the recommendations contained in the Platform for Action in the coming years. UNHCR would base its own action on those recommendations and the recommendations of the conferences on the environment, human rights, population and social development that had preceded the Beijing Conference. A senior-level task force would monitor the implementation of work plans, while four new field staff would provide advice and monitor progress at the regional level. At the national level, field focal points established in preparation for the Beijing Conference would be strengthened. UNHCR was already implementing a policy aimed at recruiting more women, particularly to senior positions. Gender training would be an essential training component for representatives and newly recruited staff, while knowledge of UNHCR policies and guidelines on refugee women would be among the core competencies identified for career advancement.

25. UNHCR recognized the importance of inter-agency cooperation and cooperation by non-governmental organizations in those efforts. Memoranda of understanding had already been signed with the World Food Programme (WFP), UNFPA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), while negotiations with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were nearing completion. UNHCR expected to take full account of the comparative advantages of each organization and to avoid any potential duplication of efforts. Its cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had resulted in greater exposure of the particular protection problems of refugee women. Gender concerns had also been identified as an important focus of its initiative with non-governmental organizations, known as Partnership in Action (PARINAC).

26. Implementation of the Platform for Action necessitated not only commitment at the highest level throughout the United Nations system but also tapping the full potential of the focal points for women in many United Nations agencies, which were not only a significant resource for the Commission on the Status of Women but also strategically placed catalysts for change.

27. Ms. HUTJES (Netherlands) observed that despite the adoption in 1979 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, many countries still had not officially recognized the equality of men and women. The Netherlands urged those countries which had not acceded to the Convention to do so and those which had entered reservations to withdraw them.

28. The final document of the Beijing Conference called on Governments to support the process leading to the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on a right of petition procedure, and her Government welcomed that initiative, which it had always favoured.

29. The Netherlands would also actively support the work of the new Special Rapporteur on violence against women, by systematically collecting relevant information. It was vital for Member States to contribute to the efforts made by the Organization.

30. The transfer to New York of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the outcome of the Beijing Conference had brought new opportunities for integrating gender perspective into all United Nations activities system-wide. As a precondition, however, all United Nations organizations should have the necessary instruments at their disposal. Her Government was currently developing a procedure for assessing the impact of policy approaches on women, which might also prove useful in measuring the impact of the Platform for Action on national policies.

31. The 1995 Human Development Report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in preparation for the Beijing Conference concluded that nowhere in the world did women have the same opportunities as men. Even in the Netherlands, women earned a quarter of the national income while they held 40 per cent of the jobs, and their average income was barely 76 per cent of that of men. It was gratifying to note that paragraph 165 (g) of the Platform for Action called for the measurement, on a world-wide scale, of unremunerated work done by women. Also to be welcomed was the progress made in education, health care and inheritance rights of girls, the struggle against family violence, trafficking in women and other forms of violence against women, and the recognition that sexual rights were basic rights.

32. The 189 countries participating in the Beijing Conference had committed themselves to implement the Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective was reflected in all their policies and programmes. Much needed to be done at the national level to combat de facto discrimination; and specific action should be taken on that score. A situation in which the requirements of only half of the world's population were taken into consideration was unacceptable. Men would also have to assume responsibility in the matter. It was a question of political will as well, and her own Government had agreed to incorporate the Beijing recommendations into a new equal rights policy document to be issued in the fall.

33. The world's population had more than doubled in 50 years. It should, however, be possible to stabilize it, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), if women participated on an equal footing with men in all aspects of the development process.

34. By the year 2005, half of the world's population would be concentrated in urban areas, which would lead to a growing demand for sanitation and social and health infrastructures in the cities. The numbers of homeless people were rising dramatically in the industrialized countries. The goal of sustainable development could be achieved only if all became involved, and women in particular. Women must contribute equally and to the same extent as men to decision-making at the community level.

35. Non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, were fortunately occupying an increasingly prominent position in United Nations world conferences, such as the City Summit. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and three international non-governmental organizations dealing with women's issues had issued a joint statement in which equal access to land, property and credit was presented as a priority issue. In the preparations for Habitat II, representatives of non-governmental organizations had been included in the drafting group which was drawing up the draft final document.

36. It was high time for all the parties involved - local authorities, the private sector and community-based organizations and not merely Governments - to cooperate actively and effectively to build the future. Women would continue to call for such participation based on political will, commitment and shared responsibility for men.

37. Ms. GRAYSON (World Bank) said that since the World Bank attached the highest importance to women's rights, it had sent a delegation headed by the President of the Bank to the Beijing Conference. It had also organized a series of seminars entitled "Beyond Beijing: Acting on Commitments to the World's Women", in order to keep the momentum of the Conference alive. In Beijing, the World Bank had made a commitment to the education of girls. It was planning to allocate about $900 million a year to that sector and was proposing two specific goals for the year 2010: that all girls should complete primary school and that an equal proportion of girls and boys - 60 per cent - would go to secondary school. A plan of action was now being mapped out, in collaboration with partners like the United Nations agencies, donors, non-governmental organizations and, most importantly, the recipient countries, to make those goals a reality by focusing on the allocation of resources, the lending priorities and the follow-up to action undertaken.

38. Education was the key to escaping from a life of poverty, but it was not enough without good health. The World Bank was already the largest source of external financing for reproductive health care, primary health care and HIV/AIDS prevention. On the financial score, World Bank research in Bangladesh had shown that, with a loan of as little as $100, a woman could double her family's income and, indeed, often lift her family out of poverty in five years. It was therefore moving ahead with its $200-million micro-finance programmes in the developing countries, and it hoped that micro-finance would become an important future activity.

39. Women must also enjoy real equality of opportunity in the workplace and be able to participate in decision-making. A country needed to grow in order to generate jobs and to ensure, through legislation and allocation of funds, that men and women had equal access to jobs, services, credit and property. The World Bank advocated such a strategy to its client countries. It was also setting up a fund to enable women to take more of a part in decision-making, in conflict prevention and resolution and in management. Consultations with women's organizations had already taken place in Africa, specifically in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana and Zambia.

40. The World Bank planned to monitor its own progress as time went on. It was holding itself to the goal of improving the gender balance within the Bank

itself, where women already now constituted about 31 per cent of the advanced professional staff. The World Bank had also been making an effort to create a more supportive environment; it had instituted an expanded family leave policy, alternative work schedules, counselling and information programmes, and strict rules against any kind of harassment.

41. Mrs. RADUCHOWSKA-BROCHWICZ (Poland) said that much had already been done in Poland for the economic and social advancement of women and that the main problems that persisted were high unemployment rates among the female economically active population, unequal access to managerial positions and failure to observe the principle of equal pay for equal work. Some of those problems were a result of the major systemic transformations under way in Poland, but all of them deserved special attention. It was not just a question of amending obsolete laws and regulations but also of changing habits and attitudes. In order to reap the benefits of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, long-term measures for its implementation should be envisaged immediately. Closer cooperation among Governments of the same region and better coordination among regional and subregional organizations should be established.

42. Her delegation also proposed strengthening or, where appropriate, establishing focal points on women within the regional commissions, in keeping with the recommendation in paragraph 301 of the Platform for Action. It commended the Economic Commission for Europe for its contribution to the regional preparatory process for the Conference, in particular within the framework of assistance to countries in transition. In that connection, it would welcome future assistance in capacity-building for the advancement of women in countries in transition. Her delegation also believed that the future role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Eastern Europe should be strengthened, since the Consultative Committee on UNIFEM had recognized that there was no reason why the Fund should not operate in that region. It hoped that the Third Committee would support that recommendation, which had already been adopted by the Consultative Committee.

43. Ms. WONG (Australia) said that, two months after the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was time to start implementing the Platform for Action within the best possible institutional framework. The General Assembly, which had overall responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the outcome of the Conference and for reviewing the progress made should integrate gender issues throughout its work. The 1996 review of the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women would afford an opportunity to improve the Commission's capacity to play a central role in monitoring the system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action, a role which would require a strong secretariat and adequate resources. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to establish a high-level board to advise him on the advancement of women, to introduce innovative approaches to follow-up and, above all, to ensure the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

44. The Economic and Social Council was to ensure that the follow-up to recent world conferences was coordinated and integrated, and it had already devoted special segments to the advancement of women and, specifically, to follow-up to the Beijing Conference. Her delegation encouraged United Nations funds and

agencies to adjust their programmes to the Platform for Action and welcomed the commitment by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to ensuring that the advancement of women became a policy priority within the common system and that the status of women in the different secretariats was improved.

45. Her Government was currently analysing the Platform for Action, especially the recommendations contained therein, and would subsequently mandate government agencies to develop programmes incorporating and addressing the critical issues of concern to women. As had been manifest in the discussions at Beijing, the most serious difficulties were faced by women living in developing countries and in communities which depended on the support provided through development assistance programmes. The donor community should therefore use the Platform for Action as a guide to the priority issues that needed to be incorporated in development assistance activities. Her Government, through its development assistance agency AUSAID, was preparing a report which would help to ensure that women's concerns were incorporated in the design and implementation of activities supported through the Australian aid programme. The most pressing issues for Australian women were increasing women's involvement in decision-making, preventing violence against women, improving access to appropriate health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and helping women balance work and family responsibilities.

46. At the regional level, Australia had played the lead role in preparations for the Conference. At Beijing, it had undertaken to assist Pacific island countries in implementing their priority programmes and commitments identified on that occasion. Consultations had already begun with a number of countries in the Pacific, not only with Governments but also with women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community organizations. In that regard, the Fourth World Conference on Women had revealed the valuable contribution to be made by NGOs. Those organizations had already embarked globally on follow-up activities and her delegation hoped that the Commission on the Status of Women would continue the dialogue and interaction with them.

47. It was encouraging to note that there were now 143 States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that other States were thinking of ratifying it; her delegation urged them to do so. Her delegation welcomed the decision taken in May 1995 to amend article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention to remove the two-week limit on the annual meetings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It also looked forward to considering the question of an optional protocol to the Convention at the next meeting of the Commission on the Status on Women.

48. Mrs. CHIGAGA (Zambia) associated herself with the statement made by the Philippine delegation on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Since the Chairperson of the 12 member States of the Southern Africa Development Community would be making a comprehensive statement on agenda items 107 and 165, she would confine her own statement to comments on the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744). In her delegation's view, one of the overriding messages of the Conference was that the objectives of the Platform for Action must be translated into concrete policies and actions in order to ensure the advancement of women. To that end, the activities of

institutions at all levels must be reoriented to expedite implementation of the Platform for Action. Above all, a policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective must be promoted by Governments, the United Nations system and all other relevant organizations.

49. The Secretary-General stated in the summary that the report focused on those recommendations which had immediate implications for action at the international level, including those requiring consideration by the General Assembly at its current session. Her delegation therefore awaited with interest the Secretary-General's proposals to the Commission on the Status of Women at its next session, which it believed would assist the Commission in developing a work programme to follow up the Platform for Action. It also hoped that he would submit proposals on mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action at all levels, a move that would facilitate meaningful debate in the Commission. While noting with satisfaction the content of paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report, she wished to point out that a number of the Secretary-General's proposals did not quite point in the direction of an integrated, effective follow-up to the Fourth World Conference. They might in fact be more conducive to maintenance of the status quo, with further duplication of effort, than to a stronger programme characterized by unity of purpose and action within the United Nations system. In the absence of a focal point within the system to ensure a more focused approach, reviewing and strengthening the strategies and working methods of different United Nations mechanisms might not be enough. In her delegation's view, that might be one of the reasons why the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had not been implemented fully. Although the Division for the Advancement of Women had been designated as the focal point for implementation of the Strategies, its focus had been on policy orientation and substantive servicing of the Commission on the Status of Women, with minimal involvement in operational activities. The resulting lack of coordination and accountability within the system had been responsible for the absence of any concrete follow-up to the implementation of the Strategies. While accepting the idea that organizational entities would exercise their line responsibilities for implementing the relevant recommendations in the Platform for Action, her delegation felt that it was imperative to establish an operational focal point. It was not entirely convinced that the proposed inter-agency task force would be sufficient, since its operation assumed the existence of an entity whose primary task would be implementation. No lead agency for the advancement of women had as yet been identified. Her delegation was not in favour of the proposal to integrate the functions of adviser on gender issues into the portfolio of one of the senior advisers in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, which it feared would result in the continued marginalization of gender issues, especially in view of the fact that the senior adviser would not have line responsibilities. Under those circumstances, it was difficult to see how effective overview and coordination could be ensured. In her delegation's view, that approach was at variance with the recommendations of the Conference, which had envisaged the role of the Secretary-General's adviser on gender issues as being that of helping to ensure system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women. Her delegation would not be opposed to giving one of the Secretary-General's senior advisers exclusive responsibility for that crucial task, within existing human and financial resources. While it was certainly important for all statements and reports emanating from the Secretary-General to

be gender-sensitive, her delegation considered that the main emphasis should be on operational gender mainstreaming and coordination. Further thought should be given to the best mechanism for coordinating the work of the adviser on gender issues, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and other concerned units. The effectiveness of those institutions, which had an important role to play in performing the tasks envisaged in the Platform for Action, must be strengthened by providing them with sufficient human and financial resources from the Organization's regular budget. Her delegation felt that over the years there had not been enough investment in the advancement of women, and it appealed to the Secretary-General to make up for that deficiency.

50. Her delegation noted with interest the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level board on the advancement of women to advise him on the follow-up to the Conference, but felt that the idea needed further development. It was not entirely convinced that the board would not duplicate the activities of the Commission on the Status of Women. If appointments to the Commission took account of individuals' expertise and areas of specialization, the Secretary-General would be able to obtain the advice he was looking for from them. Such an approach would also be conducive to greater transparency.

51. Her delegation welcomed with enthusiasm the news that concerned organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, would be invited to participate in the proposed inter-agency task force (para. 87) and hoped that such interaction might also be extended to intergovernmental bodies, a move that would facilitate implementation of the recommendation contained in paragraph 354 of the Platform for Action (para. 85).

52. Her delegation also believed that the Economic and Social Council had an extremely important role to play in that regard, since it was particularly well placed to address the social and economic aspects of the Platform for Action. It therefore looked forward to the conclusion of the process of revitalizing the Council to make it an effective policy-making organ.

53. Turning to the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women (para. 88), her delegation was reserving its position regarding the substantive debate, since it wished to satisfy itself that the proposed approach would in fact facilitate the advancement of women rather than perpetrate the marginalization of gender issues, as had been the case to date.

54. Ms. SHARFMAN (Israel), speaking on agenda item 107, said that her delegation acknowledged the success of the Fourth World Conference on Women and welcomed the Platform for Action adopted at Beijing. In Israel, all women's organizations, including those that had not participated in the Conference, had already met to discuss follow-up action. It had been decided to set up a committee to study the reports of the Conference and discuss how to implement their recommendations and decisions. The committee would work in coordination with the Prime Minister's adviser on women's issues, bringing together representatives of non-governmental organizations and the Government.

55. Several factors threatened to hinder the implementation of the Platform for Action, especially in the area of development. On the whole, women continued to be excluded from political life. Although some gains had been made, their situation remained bleak. Even at the United Nations, 50 years after the establishment of the Organization, women's views still failed to carry weight on organizational, economic and political matters. Her delegation firmly hoped to see greater participation by women at high levels in international bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the near future and believed that affirmative action should be taken to secure equality for women in international organizations and the public sector. Gender discrimination, which kept women in a position of dependence and vulnerability, also threatened to frustrate implementation of the Platform for Action. Her delegation opposed policies based on such discrimination, inasmuch as they reinforced sexual stereotypes and confined women to male-defined roles. Moreover, implementation of the Platform for Action called for full recognition in practice of women's rights as human rights, a principle endorsed by the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights.

56. Like other developed countries, Israel placed its knowledge and experience at the service of developing countries, particularly women in those countries. The Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre provided training courses for women to enhance their knowledge and skills in different areas (early childhood education, welfare services and community development and organization, among others), making them more self-reliant and capable of contributing to their country's development. The Centre, which was run by women, also offered annual training courses on the organization and management of income-generating projects, and organized symposia that were attended by women leaders from all over the world.

57. Peace in the Middle East, which had for so long seemed unattainable, was now within the grasp of Israelis and Palestinians. In the light of recent advances in the peace process, increasing numbers of Israeli and Palestinian women had been able to meet and join forces against discrimination, intolerance, extremism and other threats to their rights and to their potential for achievement. Israeli and Palestinian women had already participated in various meetings and regional conferences, such as the Mediterranean and European Women's Summit held at Marrakesh from 27 to 29 May 1994.

58. The key to cementing peace in the Middle East was to forge a culture of peace. Since women had a major role to play in that process, especially at the grass-roots level, it was important to promote their cooperation at the regional level.

59. Ms. AMORIM (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO)) said that, in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNESCO had drawn up an agenda for gender equality in which it committed itself to strengthening, in cooperation with Member States and international partners, programmes targeted at the advancement of women. The first commitment made by UNESCO in that regard was to promote education for women's self-empowerment at all levels and in all fields. The agenda also encouraged equal access to knowledge in all fields, particularly science and technology, and increased participation by women in higher education and

training programmes. It also called for the promotion of women's human rights; their attainment of full citizenship and of equal participation with men in policy-making; the enhancement of their creativity and freedom of expression; and support for pluralistic, editorially independent media.

60. The agenda also called for assistance in building a culture of peace by recognizing women's capacities and contributions. Within that framework, UNESCO had prepared a statement on women's contribution to peace which it planned to distribute to educational establishments and in which it stressed the crucial link between peace, development and gender equality and the need for human rights education. The statement had been signed by many women leaders during the Beijing Conference.

61. The 1993 Ouagadougou Declaration on the Education of Girls in Africa had identified priority areas for regional and national action to improve girls' educational opportunities. As a follow-up to the Declaration, UNESCO had set up technical and vocational training projects to enable women to earn an income and free them from low-skill jobs. UNESCO also encouraged distance education by a number of means (community radio, mobile teacher teams, mobile libraries, etc.). During the Beijing Conference, UNESCO had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh to finance women's development programmes in rural and very poor areas of Bangladesh.

62. In its medium-term strategy for 1996-2001, pursuant to the recommendations made in strategic objective B.5 of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNESCO planned to contribute to the evaluation of progress achieved in the elimination of differences between the sexes with regard to access to education and to provide technical assistance to close that gap. It also planned to emphasize women's fundamental human rights and, in particular, to ensure that they could enjoy the totality of their rights and participate more effectively, on an equal footing with men, in all aspects of social life. To that end, UNESCO was committed to developing legal literacy programmes to educate women about their rights and to intensifying its efforts to mobilize public opinion against all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

63. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer for Palestine), speaking on agenda item 107, said that there had been considerable progress in the advancement of women since the first international women's conference held in Mexico in 1975, but that many problems remained (armed conflict, civil and ethnic wars, new forms of racism and racial discrimination, foreign occupation and domination, extreme poverty, illiteracy, and increasing numbers of refugees and displaced women). The Fourth World Conference on Women had adopted a realistic Platform for Action and had set up concrete mechanisms for implementing the goals and objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. The Conference had made it possible for women from all over the world to exchange views, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation on ways of enhancing the status of women. Her delegation once again expressed its deep appreciation to the people and Government of China for hosting the Conference and contributing to its success.

64. In order to meet the challenges currently facing women, the international community must be genuinely determined to enhance their status and protect their rights and also to mobilize the necessary resources to that end. Implementation

of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would depend largely on the participation of women in policy- and decision-making.

65. With regard to Palestinian women, the Middle East peace process had helped to improve their situation by improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in general. Serious obstacles remained, however: harsh economic conditions, the building and expansion of Israeli settlements, the isolation and closure of areas of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, and land and water confiscation all had a detrimental effect on the situation of Palestinian women and children, who were already suffering from the disastrous consequences of long years of occupation (rising numbers of refugees and displaced persons, break-up of families, deterioration of health conditions, poor education, rising unemployment and depletion of the environment). Those difficulties, had not, however, prevented Palestinian women from continuing their struggle and securing recognition of their equality with Palestinian men in the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence. One of their current priorities was to adopt a declaration of principles on the rights of women and to ensure that its stipulations were incorporated in the Constitution and laws of the Palestinian National Authority. Another goal was the establishment of an official mechanism for monitoring women's issues, based on grass-roots organizations and vested with the necessary authority to influence decisions of the Palestinian National Authority. Palestinian women's active involvement as voters and candidates in the upcoming elections would allow them to make concrete progress towards achieving their goals.

66. The inclusion in the Beijing Platform for Action of the concerns of women living under foreign occupation demonstrated the international community's continuing support for Palestinian women in their struggle for independence and freedom. The implementation of the Platform for Action would help to alleviate their suffering and enable them to take a step forward on the path to equality and prosperity.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
28th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 15 November 1995
at 3.p.m.
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/38, A/50/110, A/50/163, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/257/Rev.1-E/1995/61/Rev.1, A/50/346, A/50/369, A/50/378, A/50/398, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/538, A/50/691 and A/50/747-E/1995/126)

AGENDA ITEM 165: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/50/744; A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1)

1. Mrs. LEGWAILA (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that equality between men and women and the empowerment of women were major concerns of her region and, accordingly, the Governments of the SADC countries were fully committed to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. For that aim to be achieved, the administrative machinery should be strengthened at the national level to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues through the entire governmental system. There must be dialogue and partnerships between Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society, including the private sector, which were major forces for change. The follow-up at intergovernmental level must be coordinated with national efforts. The delay in making available the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Conference (A/50/744) was regrettable. As a result, the SADC countries had not had sufficient time to make substantive proposals on the report. Their first reaction was, however, that the general thrust of the report was at variance with the Platform for Action.

2. If gender issues were to be mainstreamed through the United Nations, then the entire system must change. There was a need to create within the United Nations an identifiable focal point for the coordination of gender issues and with overall responsibility for performance. The mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women should be strengthened to that end. Currently, there was much duplication of effort, with committees, functional commissions and the Economic and Social Council debating the same items. It would be more beneficial to hold briefing sessions with the agencies of the United Nations system and, since much work was done in the field, to establish a mechanism for feedback. The Economic and Social Council should dedicate one high-level segment in the next two years to the advancement of women and the implementation of the Platform for Action with a view to formulating clear policy guidelines for its functional commissions. In order to monitor the implementation of the commitments made at Beijing, States should be requested to provide progress reports which would then be deliberated upon, along the lines of the system used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was crucial that those issues should be addressed urgently in order to maintain the great momentum created by the Beijing Conference.

3. If the international community was to respond effectively to the Conference agenda, it was vital to make available the necessary resources. The SADC countries regretted the downscaling of the United Nations agencies dealing with the advancement of women, when the Platform for Action called for their

strengthening. As the Organization celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, the time had come for the United Nations to live up to the noble ideal of equality between men and women enshrined in its Charter.

4. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso) said that in developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries, women continued to be subject to discrimination, violence and degrading treatment and were most vulnerable to the effects of increasing poverty and conflicts. Burkina Faso attached special importance to the situation of rural women and the education of young girls. Her Government had set up a fund to support remunerative activities by women and provided them with literacy courses and training related to health care and the management of cooperatives, shops and village pharmacies. In order to improve the status of women in the long-term, Burkina Faso stressed the education and training of young girls and had adopted a national action plan to the year 2000.

5. The Beijing Platform for Action contained specific provisions for following up the Fourth World Conference on Women at both the regional and international level. Work should begin immediately to achieve the objectives laid down. Developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, required all-round assistance to obtain the best results. National action plans should be drawn up on the basis of the results achieved in Beijing. A new type of partnership based on solidarity and expanded cooperation should be established between Governments and the various organizations working to promote the advancement of women.

6. Her delegation attached great importance to the invitation to the Secretary-General to establish the a high-level post to act as his adviser on gender issues. Such an adviser would help ensure the implementation of the Platform for Action throughout the system in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women. In that connection, she stressed that existing bodies should be strengthened instead of setting up new ones, particularly in view of the current financial crisis. Furthermore, the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a goal-oriented inter-agency task force on the advancement of women (A/50/744, para. 89) should be given thorough consideration before any decision was taken.

7. Burkina Faso commended the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its work in the field, and hoped that the Fund would be strengthened in line with the recommendations made in Beijing. UNIFEM should further increase its cooperation with its partners in the field; and the Fund's activities should be raised to the level of those of UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was the only instrument of its kind to promote the integration of women and enable them to cope better with new challenges in a changing world. In view of the results achieved through its research and training, the Institute's mandate should be strengthened by providing it with a stable financial basis and appointing a director without delay in order to enable it to follow up the results achieved in Beijing in the best possible manner. Her delegation believed that INSTRAW and UNIFEM complemented one another and did not feel that the proposal to merge the two would yield positive results. Accordingly, she requested the Secretariat to

withdraw the proposal on their merger, particularly in view of the recommendations by the Beijing Conference concerning the Institute.

8. She noted with satisfaction the measures taken to improve the status of women in the Secretariat and supported the submission of quarterly plans for filling a proportion of vacancies over the next biennium with women candidates. The results of the study referred to in paragraph 10 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/691) should be applied to fill two of every three vacancies with women in order to redress existing imbalances as soon as possible. In that regard, Member States should select qualified female candidates in order to propose them for recruitment to the Secretariat. Her delegation deplored the geographical imbalance in the break-down of women staff members according to region of origin and urged that that imbalance should be corrected. She noted with regret the reduction in 1995 in the percentage of women at the Assistant Secretary-General, P-4, P-2 and P-1 levels and called upon the Secretariat to strengthen its measures concerning the promotion, assignment and appointment of women in order to achieve the desired parity in accordance with the Platform for Action.

9. Lastly, her delegation expressed its concern at the increase in the international traffic in women and the recruitment of young girls in many areas of the world. Burkina Faso supported the recommendations by the Special Rapporteur dealing with that matter, particularly the adoption of legislation to prosecute persons involved in such trafficking.

10. Ms. BAIARDI (Paraguay) said that her country's Constitution established equal civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for men and women; and the recent reform of the Civil Code had put an end to the very unfavourable legal situation of women that had existed under the previous, undemocratic regime. In 1992, Paraguay had established the Secretariat for Women, which formulated policies to promote equal opportunities for women in all areas of life, including participation in political decision-making, access to employment and education. In the past five years, the country had ratified major international human rights instruments; and its new Constitution reflected the progress made.

11. Paraguay was in the midst of a far-reaching educational reform aimed at consolidating democracy, reaffirming human rights and protecting the environment. The Secretariat for Women and the Ministry of Education and Worship were implementing a programme to promote equal opportunities for women on the basis of a bilingual, non-sexist educational system and equal access to education and the labour market.

12. The Government had established an inter-agency commission, which was made up of several ministries and governmental bodies and was carrying out a national plan to prevent and punish violence against women. Begun in 1994, the plan gave due attention to the victims of violence and encouraged the reporting of physical abuse. While there were no specific norms relating to reproductive rights, the Government implemented family-planning programmes based on respect for life and freedom of choice in accessing those services. Paraguay had established the National Reproductive Health and Family Planning Council, which functioned within the constitutional framework of the right of persons to

determine freely the number of their children and to receive training, scientific guidance and services in that field. Lastly, she expressed satisfaction at the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and hoped that it would be an effective instrument to overcome obstacles in achieving greater representation of women in decision-making and eliminate acts of violence against women in all areas of their lives.

13. Mrs. ZACKLIN (Venezuela) said that the work of the United Nations system was essential in order to consolidate the commitments undertaken by Member States and the international community at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and noted with satisfaction the statement in paragraph 50 of the report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744) that the Secretary-General was strongly committed to assuming responsibility for coordination of policy within the United Nations for the implementation of the Platform for Action and for the mainstreaming of a system-wide gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations. Venezuela, a standard-bearer in the defence of the rights of women, attached great importance to the results of the Fourth World Conference. Her country's Constitution firmly enshrined the principles of equality, which promoted the participation of women in decision-making. Venezuelan women occupied the highest positions in the country's political, economic and cultural life. Sixty per cent of the judges in Venezuela were women and a similar percentage was found in its foreign service and civil service. Women constituted the majority in Venezuelan universities and did not lag behind in the private sector.

14. Her Government was committed to reducing poverty through social and economic strategies designed to meet basic needs and to protect human rights through an equitable distribution of income and wealth. The Government had also taken steps to eliminate violence against women through preventive measures, promote women's health and utilize education as an indispensable tool for guaranteeing equality of opportunities for men and women.

15. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that the commitment to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights of women, including sexual and reproductive rights, was an important achievement reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Nevertheless, that achievement must be reinforced by an equal commitment to eliminate poverty and underdevelopment in order to attain the goal of equality, development and peace by the year 2000. While many of the types of discrimination and inequality impeding the advancement of women were universal, the dangers and shortcomings which threatened the welfare of women were particularly great in the developing countries, where war, the external-debt burden and structural-adjustment measures had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable groups of society.

16. The follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women should be based on an integrated, global approach building on the progress achieved at the recent major international conferences in the economic and social field. The Platform for Action must be implemented by all United Nations bodies, funds and programmes. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference (A/50/744), she expressed regret that, on the pretext of lack of resources, it had not been possible to establish the high-level post for integrating a gender perspective into the work of the

Organization. At the same time, it was surprising to note that in other areas, particularly human rights, resources were not spared in order to meet other interests.

17. Cuba had already begun a widespread process of publicizing and discussing the commitments undertaken in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Among other initiatives, she drew attention to the preparation of a national seminar in cooperation with UNDP on the implementation of the Platform for Action with the participation of State institutions and non-governmental organizations, in order to draw up a national action plan as a strategy for developing the role of women and promoting their participation in society. Lastly, in view of the renewed commitment to strengthening United Nations institutions dealing with the advancement of women, her delegation felt that the time had come to consider how to improve and strengthen INSTRAW and UNIFEM, rather than merge them.

18. Mr. AL-HITTI (Iraq) said that the Iraqi Constitution guaranteed women equality. Iraq was a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Many mechanisms had been adopted in order to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, including the formation of a national council. Numerous laws had been promulgated to guarantee women's rights in the fields of health, literacy, education, work, participation in politics, decision-making and economic and social development. Women's participation in political life in Iraq had increased steadily over the years, and currently 27 of the 250 members of the National Assembly were women.

19. All the measures taken by the Iraqi Government over more than a decade were currently being severely affected because of the continuation of the unjust economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, despite the fact that the conditions which had justified them no longer existed. The accumulated effects of those sanctions had reached disastrous levels and affected every level of Iraqi society, particularly vulnerable groups. Lofty goals such as equality, development and peace, the watchwords of the Beijing Conference, were impossible to realize in the absence of equality between States, when conflict and enmity was substituted for peace and when sanctions were imposed instead of assistance being offered.

20. The most serious problem currently facing Iraqi women was the severe shortage of medicines and food caused by the sanctions. Scores of children, women and elderly people were dying every day, as had been stated in the reports of many United Nations bodies and human rights organizations. A recent UNICEF report had stated that 3 million Iraqis were exposed to serious danger because of lack of food and medicine. A recent British Red Cross report had also stated that Iraqis, especially children, were dying for lack of food and medicine. The United Nations Centre for Human Rights had reported growing concern amongst international humanitarian agencies. The World Food Programme (WFP) had estimated that 4 million Iraqis, including 2.4 million children under five years of age, were extremely malnourished. A senior official of WFP had stated in September 1995, that in Iraq, he had observed the worst scenario of his working life, and that the dangerous shortage of food and drugs had caused irreversible harm to a whole generation of Iraqis.

21. He quoted from strategic objective E.3 of the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20, para. 145 (h) and (i)), which called upon Governments and organizations to refrain from any unilateral measure that impeded development and the full enjoyment of economic and social rights; it reaffirmed that food and medicine should not be used as a tool for political pressure, and called for measures to alleviate the impact of economic sanctions on women and children. The sanctions imposed on Iraqi women and children constituted a violation of international human rights instruments. He pleaded that the voices of the women, children and elderly victims of the sanctions should be heard, and their suffering should not be forgotten.

22. Mrs. SANDRU (Romania) said that her delegation regarded the Fourth World Conference on Women as a turning point for the future of women world wide. It had enabled the international community to assess progress made towards the goals of equality, development and peace set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and, at the same time, to set the women's agenda for the next century. It was now important to ensure a coordinated follow-up to the Beijing Conference and the other recent international conferences dealing with social, economic and humanitarian issues.

23. In Romania, the structural transformations initiated in recent years had adversely affected social and economic conditions, in particular with respect to women. Further efforts were still required to enhance women's participation in decision-making and to balance responsibility for family care more equitably. By contrast, women and girls enjoyed adequate access to education and health. The high proportion of female employers in the private sector was evidence of women's creativity and entrepreneurial abilities.

24. The Romanian Government was aware that it bore primary responsibility for the advancement of women. In 1981, Romania had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In addition, the Constitution, Labour and Family Codes prohibited discrimination on grounds of gender, religion and nationality. The Government had recently set up a department for the advancement of women within the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Central objectives of its policy on women were the reduction of unemployment among women; the enhancement of social protection, in particular for vulnerable groups such as single mothers and low-income families; the implementation of special programmes for older women and those living in rural areas; the promotion of women to senior management and decision-making positions; the re-evaluation of women's household work; and the improvement of legislation on the status of women in society.

25. Action at global, regional and national levels to implement the Beijing Platform for action must be harmonized in order to mobilize resources effectively and to avoid duplication of effort and waste. The United Nations policy-making bodies and those directly concerned with women's issues would play a crucial role in that process, as well as in mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system. Her delegation fully supported the proposals made in that regard by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

26. Romania attached particular importance to the regional follow-up to the Beijing Conference. There was a need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the United Nations regional commissions and their women's focal points to enable them to respond to the specific needs and expectations of women in the various regions. Before the Beijing Conference, Romania had proposed that an international centre for countries of Central and Eastern Europe with economies in transition should be created in Bucharest and that a regional meeting should be organized in Romania in cooperation with the United Nations to assess the outcome of the Beijing Conference. Romania hoped that, through such joint initiatives, the commitments of the Beijing Conference could be turned into action.

27. Mr. ALHADAD (Indonesia) said that, while women had made great strides towards equality since the inception of the United Nations, much remained to be done. The Fourth World Conference on Women had highlighted the areas where progress was still needed. The task of the international community was now to maintain the momentum and to implement fully the Declaration and Platform for Action. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to review the existing United Nations mechanisms for the advancement of women with a view to enhancing the Organization's capacity in support of global policy-making and mainstreaming.

28. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (A/50/398), while female participation in the labour market had increased significantly throughout the world, unequal access to economic opportunities had resulted in the feminization of poverty. Of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, approximately 70 per cent were women. Yet the family responsibilities of women entering the labour market had not diminished. Stereotyped views of women reinforced those inequalities, making it difficult for women to attain de facto equality even while de jure equality had been reached. Only when traditional attitudes relegating women to a secondary role in society were overcome would the double burden of work performed by women begin to ease. As the international community shaped new paradigms placing people at the centre of development, the issue of equality must also be addressed. Investing in women's capabilities was the surest way to contribute to economic growth and must also be seen as valuable in itself.

29. In an effort to escape poverty, women were increasingly seeking employment in foreign countries, and all too often they were becoming victims of violence. Indonesia, as a major sending State of temporary migrant workers, welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/50/378) and the appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on violence against women. Indonesia had also been pleased to sponsor Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/7, which had recommended, among other things, that the Commission on Human Rights should make the rights of women migrant workers one of its priority concerns.

30. Indonesia supported the request by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to relocate to Geneva since that would enable it to make human rights work more gender sensitive. His delegation was concerned at the constraints under which CEDAW operated and at the backlog of country reports awaiting its consideration. CEDAW must be given sufficient time

and resources to implement its mandate effectively, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/29.

31. Given the Organization's central role in promoting equality for women, the United Nations must itself be perceived as respecting the contribution women have to make. While the status of women in the Secretariat had improved modestly, the target of a 35-per-cent participation rate by women in posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995 was yet to be reached. It was to be hoped that the current financial situation would not affect women disproportionately. Indonesia would continue its efforts at national level to remove the remaining obstacles to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the full enjoyment by women of their rights.

32. Mrs. KALAJDZISALIHOVIC (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said it was recognized that peace was a prerequisite of development, equity and equality. The women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and all other parts of the world afflicted by aggression and armed conflict were painfully aware of that need. Images of suffering, mass rape and forced pregnancy were inextricably linked with the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina. To give statistics would not do justice to the scale of suffering. The current war being waged against her country had left scars on all the population, but the scars of the aggression which had been carried out against women would be felt by generations to come. Even during the course of the current peace negotiations, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and particularly the female population were still targeted for murder, rape or expulsion as ruthlessly as when the aggression had begun.

33. She stressed that all those who had committed crimes would be held individually responsible before the International Tribunal on the former Yugoslavia, under the statute of which rape was considered to be a war crime and a crime against humanity. She stressed the importance of the work of the Tribunal and requested that all the resources and support necessary should be made available to it to enable it to continue its work.

34. Against the odds, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina had won the battle for survival. Women there would face many challenges because of the numerous current problems in the political, economic, social and cultural fields. However, the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina refused to be victims and passive observers, but actively participated in the daily struggle for survival. Despite the difficult war circumstances, women had organized themselves and were actively involved in all fields, and were largely responsible for the continuing successful function of all structures of Bosnian society.

35. Women were also concerned with the future of the country, particularly peacemaking and peace-building, the promotion of the values of peace, human rights, tolerance, political dialogue and understanding. Peace had to be founded upon at least a minimum level of justice. Fascist ideology had therefore to be defeated legally, by means of the Tribunal; politically and culturally, by promoting democracy for all citizens and respecting all cultural, ethnic, and national diversity; and militarily, by strengthening the capabilities of the victim to defend those values. Free and democratic elections must be held as soon as basic respect for human rights had been

established, and refugees and displaced persons must be given the opportunity to return and vote in those elections.

36. Her country's long-term goal was for a democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina within internationally recognized borders, with a society which enjoyed the highest standards of human rights for all citizens and gave opportunities to all, including women. Women must not remain victims. Their direct participation in the rebuilding of society, restoration of the rule of law and reconciliation would represent an invaluable contribution to a just and lasting peace.

37. Mrs. CISSE (Mali) said that the statistics that had emerged from the 1980 Copenhagen Conference had been indicative of the many forms of discrimination against women. The Beijing Conference had confirmed that, despite endeavours to improve the status of women, major challenges still remained to be faced in that regard.

38. Her Government had long recognized the importance of including the status of women in its development programmes in order to achieve the objectives of sustainable development. The establishment of a multi-party system in Mali had led to the emergence of a number of women's associations which concerned themselves with improving the lives of urban and rural women, and to the organization of the National Women's Forum, which had made an in-depth analysis of the institutional, social and cultural, legal, educational and productive situation of women, while documents stemming from it had provided a basis for defining a women's policy. In 1993, the Government had set up an Office for the Advancement of Women; its tasks included the creation of a data bank on women's problems and the provision of opinions, research and advisory services regarding the integration of women in national development. At the regional level, women coordinators were responsible for identifying specific women's problems and proposing appropriate solutions.

39. Mali supported the proposal to amend article 20 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to render the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women more efficient; it also welcomed the creation of the post of Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women.

40. Since INSTRAW was the only entity within the United Nations system devoted to research and training for the integration of women in development, the international community had a duty to support its maintenance and reinforcement.

41. Mr. DABBAS (Jordan) said that women must become equal partners with men in all facets of world affairs in order for humanity to realize its full potential. The Jordanian Government had adopted a positive attitude towards the integration of women into development, that was based on its Constitution, respect for human rights and the principles of the Holy Koran and the Islamic Shariah. Poverty and unemployment were still a major obstacle to the advancement of women. The Jordanian National Committee for Women had been established in 1992 as a policy forum, and its first achievement had been to draw up the national strategy for women. The main features of that strategy were the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which had previously hindered the enjoyment of

their political, social and economic rights; the improvement of women's role in society, and support for their participation in social development and the work force, and the establishment of women's committees to promote education and training.

42. There were several non-governmental organizations in Jordan which specialized in promoting development, particularly on behalf of women. The two major ones were the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation and the Queen Alia Fund for Development, which aimed to improve the quality of life of underprivileged communities and to accelerate the integration of low-income women in development through innovative income-generating schemes. While much work remained to be done, it was clear that Jordan's public and private sectors were committed to women's advancement and the promotion of equal opportunities, the family being the basic unit of society, with women at its core.

43. Cooperation was the key to rehabilitation of the region's economies and their linkage to international systems and organizations. The women's sector in Jordan had benefited from UNDP, UNFPA and UNIFEM programmes, and his country looked forward to further collaboration with those and similar programmes.

44. In the Middle East, women's development required peace, stability and economic prosperity. The Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and the North African economic summit held recently in Amman would help to sustain a new era of peace and development and improve quality of life in the region.

45. Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria) said that in order to make the Beijing Conference a lasting success there was a need for commitment to the implementation of the programmes agreed upon. His delegation noted with appreciation the commitment by the United Nations Population Fund to implementing the Platform for Action through support for capacity-building, skill and leadership training for women.

46. Where UNIFEM was concerned, continued support was required in order to enhance its capacity for more effective action to eliminate poverty, promote food security, prevent violence against women and involve women more in decision-making.

47. The role of INSTRAW as a think-tank could not be over-emphasized. It should continue to receive international assistance to enhance its research capacity on issues relevant to women's advancement.

48. The Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level board (A/50/744, para. 61) to advise him on gender issues seemed unsatisfactory; it could become bogged down with administrative matters which could delay programme implementation. His delegation called for consideration of the recommendation concerning a senior adviser on gender issues (ibid., paras. 54-57), and would also support the mobilization of resources to strengthen international cooperation for the further empowerment of women.

49. Mrs. KOVALSKA (Ukraine), speaking on agenda item 165, said that the final documents of the several international conferences held since 1991 had served as a basis for consensus at the Beijing Conference. The Beijing Platform for

Action had emerged from it as a powerful agenda for women, based on the equation of human rights and women's rights.

50. In Ukraine, preparations for Beijing had begun with the establishment of the organizational committee and its plan of action. In 1995, the Committee for Women, Maternity and Childhood had been set up and the creation of appropriate bodies at the local level was envisaged in the near future. The central event of the preparations, however, had been the parliamentary hearings on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in July 1995, the recommendations of which provided for essential changes in the country's legislation as well as organizational measures to bring the situation of women into line with international standards.

51. The major tasks of national policy were to take measures to implement the Parliament's recommendations, to inform public opinion about the Beijing Conference and to involve grass-roots organizations in elaborating a national programme by and for women through the introduction of gender-sensitive approaches in all aspects of life.

52. Her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made earlier by the delegation of Poland concerning the extension of the activities of UNIFEM to countries with economies in transition.

53. Ukraine supported paragraphs 34-36 of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744), concerning regional and subregional follow-up, and stressed the importance of the preparatory work for the Beijing Conference done by the European Commission. It was convinced that the challenging tasks facing the European region in that regard required a permanent focal point on women's issues, and hoped that the integration of Ukraine into the European structures would contribute to developing the self-confidence of Ukrainian women. A better coordination of efforts for the protection of women's rights between European structures and the United Nations would also contribute to the common cause.

54. The key requirements for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the international level were the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the work of the United Nations and the mobilization of adequate resources. Her delegation also supported the proposed creation of a high-level post in the Office of the Secretary-General to that end.

55. Mrs. ACHARYA (Nepal) said that the Beijing Platform for Action was a landmark document in the history of women's human rights, but that there was a long way to go to eliminate discrimination against women in all parts of the world. At the same time, since women represented the majority of over 1 billion people living in poverty world wide, they should be given an equal opportunity to participate in the formulation of macroeconomic and social policies to eradicate poverty. The most important tasks were to empower women and ensure their participation in decision-making.

56. According to statistics, the number of women living in poverty had increased in recent years because they lacked economic opportunities and

autonomy as well as economic resources. Equitable social development which would empower women to mobilize environmental resources was a prerequisite for sustainable development.

57. The Government of Nepal was committed to raising the status of women, the majority of whom lived in rural areas and faced social discrimination. It had set up a Ministry of Women and Social Welfare and had initiated programmes such as education for girls, to promote the status of women.

58. Only through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women was sustainable development and sustained economic growth possible. Governments and international organizations should endeavour to work on the basis of the integration of the gender perspective with adequate institutional and financial support.

59. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendations for the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action on a biennial basis and for the review and strengthening of the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women. Nepal was committed to the development of a society where men and women worked together to promote social progress and better standards of living within a framework of fundamental democratic values.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.